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ABSTRACT

This collection includes five papers dealing with different foci on the ecology of child development. The first presentation discusses childhood social indicators as means of monitoring the ecology of development. The second, on tne social context of childhood, shows that how society treats its youngest members depends both upon its perception of what children are like and its perception of what is required for effective functioning of society itself. The value of children to parents and the decrease in family size is the subject of the third paper. This paper notes that in order to predict fertility trends and birth rates, one needs to understand the motivational factors underlying the desire to have children and to analyze these motivations in relation to other social conditions--such as analyzing the needs that children satisfy, as well as costs (both emotional and financial) that are involved in parenthood. The fourth paper, on "reality and research in the ecology of human development", documents the changes over time that have been taking place in one enduring context which is critical for human development--i.e., the family. The final paper focuses on mounting effective child advocacy. (Author/JM)

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ECOLOGY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Papers read at the Annual General Meeting
April 25, 1975

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CHILDHOOD SOCIAL INDICATORS: MONITORING THE ECOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT

ORVILLE G. BRIM, JR.

President, Foundation for Child Development, New York

(Read April 25, 1975, in the Symposium on Ecology of Child Development)

Two CONCEPTS in the title deserve an introductory word or two before moving on. By ecology of development we mean simply to designate the natural settings of developing children—the types of families, the types of communities, the friendship groups, the characteristics of their schools, contact with the adult world, and similar environmental factors.

As for childhood social indicators—one might ask "What are they?" Nothing esoteric is meant by using the terms "indicators of the state of the child" or "indicators of child development," or even "childhood social indicators." These all refer to the same body of information, namely: statistical time series data that measure changes (or constancies) in significant characteristics. To produce these facts requires that there be identical measures, repetitively applied over time, to comparable populations of children and to their environments.

Familiar examples are reading achievement scores, the number of children in foster homes, the frequency of lead poisoning attributable to paint peeling in deteriorating housing, the number of parents arrested on charges of child abuse, the number of hours the television set is on in the middle-income American home.

I. MACRO-STRUCTURE INFLUENCES ON CHILD CARE

We are, in this nation, moving into an era which may be historically the most precarious for America's children. The evolution of our society from a rural to an urban-based family system, from an extended to a nuclear family system, and from a labor-intensive to a machine economy, has made the child no longer an economic asset in the family.

Meanwhile, marked increases in the cost of raising a child cause individual parents and the economy generally to view child-bearing and child-rearing as an economic liability, in competition with other values. Moreover, at the ideological level there has been a downgrading of the sense of personal worth derived from parenthood, especially for women. The ego satisfactions gained from having children are deteriorating.

How then, can children lay claim to our support in this new era? What do they have left? Children lay claim on the rest of us now because they are vulnerable; and thus engage our humanitarianism; because they are persons and hold legal rights, as we do, in society and thus demand our consideration; and because in children we see the future of man, and they are integral to our most distant visions.

But these are weakening claims, no longer backed up by the economic sanction of a productive position in society. The child's weakness is manifest in much that we see about us: just recently in federal cutbacks of support of child nutrition—the decrease in subsidized school lunches; and, in support of child health—as in the refusal to provide free vaccinations. We can observe that when things get tight, "children are the first to go."

In this era when children have become objects for manipulation, the subject of budget cuts, the targets of mass advertising, the scapegoats of prejudice, we need additional strategies. It no longer is enough to do medical and psychological research on the development of children, nor to intervene on an individual basis in providing comfort, counseling, and therapy. We need national policies for child development, and so we must add now a concern with the macro-structural influences on child development. As knowledge from the behavioral and social sciences grows, we can raise our aspirations and progress from amelioration to intervention, and to the sophisticated concept of linkages between child development and society's macro-structure.

Our blueprint for child-development work in the decade ahead must include intervention in the great social forces—technology, the law, the mass media, economic and social discrimination—which

affect our child-care institutions—the family, the school, the clinic, the day-care center.

One is moved inexorably to the consideration of macro-structural forces—of economic influences, of historical determinants, of cultural values, of sociological trends and political science factors. One must deal with the new histories of child care, which show the powerful influences on child-rearing of beliefs about the fundamental nature of "human nature," such as basic depravity, or predestination. We are directed to the issue of income redistribution and income maintenance policies; to questions of the effects of race discrimination and social stratification on day-to-day family operations; to the influence of the mass media on children, both detrimental and benign.

If we are to study these large-scale societal influences on children—as I believe we must—new talents are required. As I have said often during this past year, we must get some new actors onto the child-development scene. We must recruit new and different kinds of behavioral and social scientists—economists, historians, lawyers, political scientists, and sociologists—to pursue their inquiries linking macro-institutions to the lives of children, and to link up with developmental psychologists, social workers, child psychiatrists, pediatricians, in analyzing the impact of societal forces on the individual child.

II. THE VALUE OF CHILDHOOD SOCIAL INDICATORS

To intervene successfully—to be effective—at this level of policy formation and public action requires more information on the state of the child in this country.

The value of these indicators is twofold: to allow us to relate changes in environmental factors to changes in children's well-being; and to provide a better national profile of children's lives and of the care they receive.

1. *Evaluation*

The successful development of macro-level policies requires evaluations linking the social experiment to children, and this in turn requires data collected over time in a systematic way, on America's children.

During the past decade social action programs have been expanding rapidly, and interest has been recently mounting in the importance of evaluating both traditional and innovative activities in the broad human resources area. Competition is increasing for resources, both human and economic, and there is often too little sound information on the utility of programs for intelligent decision making on resource allocation. Policy-makers, public administrators, and social researchers all have come to recognize the potential utility of undertaking evaluations.

The purpose of evaluation studies is (1) to describe how social programs operate and to assess whether they conform to the procedures specified in the program plan and (2) to measure their impact. The benefits from the program, particularly with respect to the objectives set, can be assessed in relation to the costs incurred in program activities.

Currently, the executive branch of the federal government is deeply committed to evaluation—being involved in something approaching $400 million worth of evaluation studies. The course of American society may well be changed substantially by the outcome of these federally sponsored evaluation studies, and by other such studies being undertaken in the private sector. The results of evaluation of the negative income tax experiment in New Jersey, for example, may change national welfare policy; the evaluation of performance contracting by school systems may alter policies of the country's 2,000 or so school districts, the results of the evaluations of the "Sesame Street" educational television program may deeply influence federal policies toward use of television in preschool education.

A special study of the fiscal year 1970 shows that at least one-third of the evaluation studies of that year were directly addressed to child-development issues; that is, were evaluations of programs in education, and selected programs in welfare, health, and income security. But also, even though not directed categorically to children, many of the programs evaluated are judged to have direct relevance for child welfare. Such matters as parks and recreation legislation, housing requirements, transportation safety, regulation of television—also require appraisal. To illustrate, there is a possibility of recording the actual consequences for children of the New Jersey income maintenance program on such objective criteria as school attendance, school performance, and health records.

2. *Action and Policy Formation*

Some may say that we are now drawing interest and resources away from the needs of children

today, away from intervention, and action, and support, and nurturance. I do understand that children compete for the taxpayers' dollar in the same way that urban housing, highway construction, pure water, and desegregation of the labor force compete for these same funds. Still, it is my view that charting the influence of societal institutions on child development is complementary to, rather than competitive with, active intervention to change society now. Indicators of the state of the child contribute to both research and action. I have stressed the evaluative function of child social indicators. However, descriptions of group differences among children have another edge to the blade; for it is the very description of needs and deficiencies which provides a scientific basis for public policy changes and legal intervention.

It has been pointed out that

> The administrative statistics which are so often relied on for policy debate and decision-making can provide information only on the families which are covered by or make use of the particular social service. Repetitive sample surveys can provide far better estimates of the need for resources and the incidence and prevalence of various behavioral and developmental problems in the general child population.[1]

I should make explicit that I am not counting only on the compassion of the American public to lead to positive action for children, when their problems are identified through descriptive statistics. As Arthur Koestler has said "Public conscience is a diffuse kind of vapor that rarely condenses into workable steam." The fact is that social indicators of the state of children contribute to the strength of legal action to redress injustices. The development of public interest law firms and child advocacy law groups in particular has been one of the major new social forces of the past decade. I need only remind you that the Children's Defense Fund must rely on descriptions of group differences, as in the recent successful suit on behalf of children excluded from school. And—two decades ago—the 1954 Supreme Court desegregation decision was based on just such statistical description of group differences between black and white children.

[1] Nicholas Zill, "Childhood Social Indicators: Local Versus National Data," American Orthopsychiatric Association Meeting, March, 1975.

III. CURRENT STATE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL INDICATORS IN THE UNITED STATES

As my colleague at the Foundation for Child Development, Dr. Nicholas Zill, has pointed out,

> National statistics on the well-being of children, on the amounts and kinds of care they are receiving, on their physical, cognitive, and emotional development —such statistics vary greatly in availability, quality, adequacy of population coverage, geographic scope and detail, continuity, and comparability over time. Data on the psychological well-being of children and on their social and emotional development are generally much less adequate than statistics on children's physical health and development, or on their intellectual development and educational achievements.

The successful development of childhood social indicators over the long run depends on government because the necessary facilities and funds are too great for private ventures. Government is *de facto* the chief producer of national social indicators. The kind of statistics produced by the government largely determines the substantive scope, time depth and frequency, and the precision of available social indicators on children. The knowledge we have about social change in America depends on how the federal statistical agencies present their data, as well as on the content of those data. The government also sponsors and conducts most of the large-sample, large-budget, high quality surveys done in the United States, especially the recurring ones.

Among the things we must try to accomplish with federal agencies are the following:

(1) To encourage federal statistical agencies to make more of a commitment to thorough and sophisticated analysis of the data they collect that relate to children; and to timely, interpretive reporting of the findings of such analyses.

(2) To make federal statistical data relating to children better known and more readily available to non-federal analysts and child-development researchers.

(3) To repeat major baseline studies. The replication of important federal surveys that relate to children, such as the comprehensive nationwide study on child-care arrangements, allows for the measurement and analysis of overtime changes and constancies in the characteristics, settings, and services of America's children.

(4) And, finally, to lay the groundwork for eventual adoption of national surveys of children as a continuing program of one of the federal statistical agencies.

The private sector—that is, foundations, universities, and independent research centers—have a unique role in developing social indicators *vis-à-vis* the federal government. Surveys undertaken in the private sector *must* be lodged there when the data to be obtained touch on political or cultural sensitivities; e.g. the citizen is unlikely to approve of spending public tax money to ask children how they feel about their parents. The private sector is needed also when initiative is impossible for government agencies because of public—that is, political—apathy about the nature of the enterprise, as may well be the case for surveying the state of America's children.

The first major, public, national probability sample interview survey of young children in the United States is under way. This project is under the direction of Dr. Nicholas Zill, senior staff scientist at the Foundation for Child Development. The project will have two principal goals. The first is the improvement of statistics on the physical and psychological well-being of children in the United States and the monitoring of changes in these child welfare measures over time. The second is the development of an accurate national profile of the way children live and the care they receive, and the relation of variations in these conditions to differences and change in childhood well-being indicators. The survey, to be conducted in 1976, will include: (1) interviews with a national sample of children to measure their perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and values; (2) the collection of observational and parental reports on children's behavior patterns and the circumstances of their lives; (3) such subjects as the personal characteristics of the children, the socioeconomic resources of their families, the kinds of care they receive.

A prototype of a "State of the Child" Report for New York City will be issued in the fall of 1975 by the Foundation for Child Development. The decision to develop this report follows a feasibility study that included an exploration of administrative data sources in New York City; studies of various aspects of child welfare, health, and education; and relevant literature on social indicators as well as related work now in progress in other parts of the country.

The report will be based on demographic data that will show both the present situation and significant trends concerning children and their families. It will set forth a group of childhood social indicators—modest to begin with—that measure the well-being of children or the environment in which they are reared. The indicators are being selected and grouped according to seven broad "concerns" about the quality of life of children and their families.

IV. UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS IN OUR CHOICE OF CHILDHOOD SOCIAL INDICATORS

It is easy to imagine a vast list of ecological conditions—that is, characteristics of a child's environment—as well as of personal characteristics of children, which might be included in any set of descriptive materials on the nation's children. Selection is required. But back of the choice that the policy-maker or child-development reseacher makes, are certain assumptions about causes, and about cultural biases and beliefs, and values about children. I want to comment on three of these often overlooked premises which influence the choice of indicators of the state of children.

1. *The Assumption that There is a Correlation Between Objective and Subjective Conditions*

This means, simply, the belief that, if we improve the quality of the child's environment, then we are improving his or her sense of well-being or happiness. Much social policy planning for children, and efforts to improve their conditions generally, proceed on this unexamined or at least untested premise. I wish to avoid being misunderstood. I am saying that satisfaction of primary needs—hunger, shelter, warmth, and all—are directly correlated with sense of well-being. The Constitution in this country provides for it; justice demands it. But beyond such basic needs we cannot assume that objective conditions have similar subjective meanings, or to put it in familiar terms, we cannot assume that money buys happiness. The subjective reaction to the improvement of objective life conditions is mediated by frames of reference and the sense of relative deprivation. We still know little about how man deals with affluence, or indeed whether as an organism it is a suitable state for his personality —in the same sense that walking upright may not be a suitable state for his body.

To illustrate, improving the quality of housing for lower-middle-class whites yields greater satisfaction with one's housing, while the same improvements for non-whites in this income group yields less satisfaction—engages, that is, the rising tide of expectation and a sense of deprivation. And, in a study in progress, Arlene Skolnick at the University of California at Berkeley is one of many exploring this problem in child social indicators. Dr. Skolnick deals among other things with the amount of time parents spend with children about nine or ten years old—an important variable since much has been written in developmental psychology and sociology about the importance of parents spending more time with children. The question is whether the actual amount of time spent makes the child feel more loved, or happier, or wanted, or part of the family, or whether it is the amount of time relative to expectations of what is "the right amount of time," these standards being set by friends in school, or television models, or whomever. It has been pointed out by scholars in the social indicators field that perhaps the most important unresolved issue concerning the quality of life is the nature of subjective transformations on objective reality which produce feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.[2]

2. *The Emphasis on Becoming versus Being*

American society, indeed western culture as a whole, is oriented to the future rather than to the present; that is, emphasizes the becoming rather than the being; emphasizes promise and aspiration rather than what is now being called "the now moment." I believe this is manifest in this nation's attitude toward children, and is evident in the developing work on child social indicators. The interest is not in the child in his own right, but in the child as "father of the man"; that the child is not loved for what he is, but what he can become. Policies directed to, say, retarded children, are appraised by a cost benefit analysis to society, namely, how dollars invested at age two will keep the retarded child out of a costly special school during the later school years rather than how the money might aid the child now!

This theme in the selection of what to study in child social indicators is not likely to be eliminated for this future-orientation suffuses our thinking about children. Nor, perhaps, does it need be eliminated if such is the value of our times, but appreciation of the fact that this is what one is really about could eliminate some of our current mistakes, and lead on to much more worth-while research in this vein than we have now. As matters now stand, the data gathered by researchers in child development too often turn out to be of little value in understanding man over his lifespan. The facts are straightforward. There is no "mythical plateau of adulthood" which one reaches after childhood; personality is not fixed by the early years of one's childhood. Instead, hundreds of studies of personality changes in adulthood show substantial variability in almost all personal characteristics and moreover attempts to predict from childhood or adolescent performance in school and family, to degree of success in occupation, or community or one's adult family life show correlations close to zero. We know a great deal about how to predict performance in the educational system, up to graduation, based on measures of intelligence, family interaction, and physical growth, but none of these—including performance in school—predict well the degree of success in later life.

3. *The Child's Developing Sense of Self in Contrast to Cognitive and Physical Growth Measures*

In the behavioral sciences specific concern with the child's developing sense of self has never been substantial. There is much greater interest in cognitive and intellectual processes, basic motor skills, perceptual development and linguistic achievement. Part of this is attributable to early development in the First World War of the mass use of intelligence tests in American society so that developmental and educational psychologists have been drawn to do research where measurement techniques are available. It has been pointed out that, if Binet had developed a test of musical ability, we might have a nation which prized musical rather than verbal talents.

As for public opinion, that is of parents, a main interest, responsive to the influence of Freud and psychoanalytic theory in the United States from 1910 on, was in social and emotional aspects of child development. For parents and the public generally, during the past fifteen years greater attention has been focused on intellective development rather than the child's developing self. This has been a noticeable change, for in the mid-1950's

[2] Angus Campbell, Phillip Converse, and Willard Rogers, *Monitoring the Perceived Quality of Life* (New York, in press).

virtually no attention was being given in materials written for parents to the cognitive development of their children.[3] Today the most popular material for parents and professional students is of this sort. Many events likely contributed to this shift of interest: the launching of Sputnik and American concern about its technological competence; the pressure on college admissions from the population bulge, spilling down into secondary and elementary school, responsiveness to parental emphasis on intellectual ability and test performance; the "discovery" of the culturally deprived led to knowledge redistribution in federal policies designed to improve intellectual performance, so that children in deprived groups could enter and maintain their position in the American educational system. The "Head Start" project is illustrative here. So, as I have said elsewhere, during the past fifteen years we have seen millions for I.Q., but hardly a dime for love and joy—so that only now are we once again starting to ask children, "Show me what else you can do besides read and write."

In closing then, may I say that I expect our new childhood indicator surveys to include questions on the child's subjective state—on the child's being rather than on becoming—and on the child's sense of self—of personal worth, of value, growth and distinction—along with measures of cognitive and physical development.

[3] Orville G. Brim, Jr., *Education for Child Rearing* (New York, 1959).

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF CHILDHOOD*

SARANE SPENCE BOOCOCK

Russell Sage Foundation

(Read April 25, 1975, in the Symposium on Ecology of Child Development)

ALTHOUGH PROBLEMS pertaining to the status and care of children have emerged as important political and policy issues in modern industrialized societies, the input of sociologists to the formulation and debate of issues has been slight. Ruth Hill Useem, who argues that the social problems of children, already beset by the changing lifestyles of adults, constitute a crisis area in our society, predicts that the next generation of sociologists will be more concerned with the sociology of childhood and will develop more sophisticated concepts for studying and understanding them.

I think we would be unwise to wait for the next generation of sociologists, and I would like to discuss what I feel are some major social problems concerning the status and treatment of children, and some concepts and kinds of research which I think could shed light on these problems.

How a society treats its youngest members depends both upon its perception of what children are like and its perception of what is necessary for the smooth functioning of the society itself. I would like first to review the perception of children as it has evolved in our society, and then to identify the combination of social trends which makes the bearing and rearing of children particularly problematic today. Finally, I would like to talk about some of the special problems of research on the sociology of children, and describe some of the ways in which these problems may be attacked.

A review of various periods of American history reveals quite different views of the child. In the early days of our country, all able-bodied persons constituted a much-needed source of labor. In a society in which the majority of the population were children and in which idleness was a sin, most children worked by the age of six or seven, either sharing in the activities of their parents or working as apprentices and servants in the households of other people. Demos's study of family life in Plymouth Colony (1970) shows that the parent-child relationship was marked by reciprocal obligations and a certain amount of ambivalence. There was a surprising amount of "putting out" of children at all social class levels of the society, including many quasi-legal arrangements in which the child would receive room and board and some form of instruction or training in return for assistance in the home or workshop. Demos estimates that children formed the greatest portion of persons in servitude in the colony.[1]

It should also be noted that by the nineteenth century many children were learning reading, calculating, and other academic skills at a very early age. As a consequence of the infant education movement of the early eighteen hundreds (a kind of precursor of Head Start), many three-year-olds were in school—e.g., in 1840, ten per cent of all Massachusetts children under four were regular students. The precepts of infant education came into conflict with the newer ideas of Pestalozzi and others, that the young child's place was in the home and that he should be given playthings rather than books and writing materials, and with the rise of the "cult of the home," and by 1860 children under six had all but been removed from the formal school system (from presentation by Maris Vinovskis at a seminar held at the Russell Sage Foundation, April 4, 1975. Vinovskis also pointed out that this important precursor of early childhood education in this country not only died out by the end of the nineteenth century, but was also forgotten).

The growth of industrialized cities after the Civil War brought the first recognition of the special needs of children, partly because Americans were faced for the first time with large numbers of children who did not "belong" any-

* The research reported here has been supported by grants from the Russell Sage Foundation.

[1] It has been suggested that European and American parents did not trust themselves with their own children, and that the impulse to send them away into other people's homes was a reflection both of a fear of spoiling them and of a reluctance to subject them to the harsh discipline of the home-workplace. As Demos points out, however, there is no way to confirm this or alternative interpretations with hard evidence.

where in the society. Accounts of the period such as Jacob Ries's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and *The Children of the Poor* (1892), include descriptions of swarms of unattended, often homeless children roaming the streets of New York and other cities. Some were fully employed —*The Newsboy, Ragged Dick,* and other best-selling novels of the period romanticized the adventures and ultimate wordly success of newspaper and shoeshine boys, and there were boarding houses in large cities for some of these "independent little dealers," financed completely by their earnings—but many more children survived by begging and stealing (Hawes, 1971: pp. 99 ff). It was, indeed, the visibility of homeless, mistreated and delinquent children, along with the new framework and set of analytical tools for defining social problems provided by the rise of social science in the United States, which led to the child labor laws, compulsory school attendance, and the creation of agencies and institutions devoted to the protection of children (e.g., the Children's Aid Society, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and juvenile courts).

The twentieth century has been characterized by emphasis upon childhood as a special period in the life cycle. While the claim of one social historian that "childhood in America is not only admired; it is looked upon as a national asset, somewhat on a par with the Declaration of Independence or the Mississippi River" (Larrabee, 1960: p. 199), may be an exaggeration, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of childhood and children is an unmistakable feature of our society.

The twentieth century has also been characterized by the extension of formal education. In the report of the Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, it is pointed out that:

> The American system has steadily changed its character from elite to mass, first at the elementary level in the nineteenth century, then at the secondary level in the first half of the twentieth century, and now in higher education in the years since World War II. This experience with expansion took place a quarter to a half-century and more ahead of the trend in other industrial societies. The American secondary school enrolled only 15% of the age group 14 to 17 in 1910 but then advanced all the way to 80% in the three decades up to 1940, while at the latter date the share of the age group caught up in secondary education was still a minority in Britain, France and Germany. In higher education, the American system was elite at the turn of the century in that it enrolled only 4% of the age group 18–21, but slowly expanded to about 15% by 1940 and then leaped to over a third by 1960, while the European systems in the middle 1960's were below or just reaching the proportions found in America before World War II. The countries of Western Europe moved seriously toward universal secondary education only in the 1950's and 1960's and to the edge of mass higher education only in the last several years. Thus, American schooling has been characterized by a relatively high rate of participation that has made it the first national system to establish the secondary school as a universal framework for the experiences of early adolescence and the first several years of college as a formal setting looming evermore inclusive for later adolescence and early adulthood (Panel on Youth, 1974: pp. 76–77).

One important consequence of defining childhood as a special period (or as a *series* of special stages, as postulated in a model like Piaget's developmental stages) is that the child is not expected to make any real contribution to the productive life of the community. As Robinson, Robinson *et al.* comment, in an analysis of American child rearing manuals:

> . . . the focus is on the individual child, his "self-realization" through "self-discovery" and "self-motivated behavior." While other people are to assist him in this process, they are not to get in his way. As for the question of the child's obligations to others—especially to those not his own age—the training manuals are strangely silent (Robinson, Robinson, *et al.*, 1974: p. 381).

The separation of children from the workaday life of the larger society is a quality which American children share with children in developed countries generally, but which distinguishes them from such contemporary societies as Israel, where kibbutz children tend gardens and animals from a very early age and elementary school children in Jerusalem took on such community responsibilities as mail delivery and garbage collection during the Six Day War (de Shalit, 1970); or mainland China, where elementary school workshops turn out machine components for buses and other heavy equipment, and all school children spend a month and a half every year in some form of productive labor (Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, 1972; Munro, 1971).

The process by which children became cut off from the larger society is analyzed in the work of Beatrice and John Whiting comparing the life of children in simple cultures of African agricultural settlements with life in the new African cities. The Whitings found that children in the relatively "primitive" African communities are expected to help out from a very early age. Children between the ages of three and ten help in

the gardens, bring wood and water, and help with the herding. Children of this age often have full responsibility for the care of younger siblings while their mothers work in the gardens or at herding, work that may take them away from the village for several hours a day. The Whitings observe that, compared with children from more complex societies, these African village children:

> . . . are more responsible and nurturant to others, more concerned with the welfare of the family; less egoistic in their demands.
>
> There is no indication that this type of labor overtaxes the child. At that age between three and eight when children are so eager to play the role of adults, they are permitted to do so and are made to feel that they are important contributors. It is true that their parents exert more pressure toward obedience and are more punitive when they fail to perform their tasks responsibly, but this is not surprising when one considers that 5–7 year olds are being entrusted with human lives and valuable stock (Whiting, 1972: pp. 4–5).

When African families move from the village to the city, life changes for both mothers and children in significant and not always favorable ways. In the city house:

> The children are underfoot. They ask questions about the city which their mother cannot answer. There are none of the numerous relatives, old and young, at hand to share in social interaction with the children. There are no animals, baby cousins to tend, gardens to weed, and animals to feed, and other tasks to keep them busy and make them feel adult during the years from three on, when they are motivated to master the adult world. . . . The hired caretaker, be it a relative, older sibling, or local person, is not educated and not able to introduce the children to the world of symbols—books, crayons, paper, etc. to replace the world of plants, animals and relatives. The mother returns from work to find the pre-school children in a different frame of mind than in the country when she returned from the garden. We have not as yet done systematic observations in many homes where the mothers work seven to eight hours a day, but I expect to find them as hectic as many of the homes of working mothers in the U.S., who live in cramped quarters with inadequate help and return home tired after a day's work (Whiting, 1972: pp. 7–8).

For the past few years, I have been collecting data on the daily lives of American children in a variety of communities. While this research is still in the preliminary stages, certain themes seem to be emerging, especially when these new data are compared with similar kinds of data collected two decades ago by Matilda White Riley and associates on New Jersey children, and by Barker and Wright on children in a small midwestern town. By contrast with the children of the nineteen-fifties who encountered a number of adults during the normal course of a day and whose diaries reported a myriad of youth-oriented but adult-directed activities (such as scouting, church activities, and family outings), many of the children of the nineteen-seventies report spending most of the time they are not in school alone or with other children, mainly in relatively unorganized activities such as watching television, eating snacks, and "fooling around." Few children spend as much as two hours a day with an adult other than a teacher, and few meals are eaten together as a family. Some children go shopping with their mothers, but with the exception of small town children, almost none do errands or chores or contribute in any other way to the running of the household. Rarely does a child work with an adult on some project or even observe an adult at his work (in contrast with, say, Israeli kibbutz children, who not only work in the community themselves, but daily see their parents and other adults engaged in their regular work). While there were individual children whose lives were filled with activities or who had home responsibilities, what strikes all of us who have examined these data is how few contemporary children seem to have strong linkages with the larger society, either through extensive interaction with parents or other adults or through participation in activities that make a real contribution to the home, community, or country.

SOCIAL TRENDS AFFECTING THE STATUS OF CHILDREN

The care and education of children has always been problematic to societies as a whole as well as to individual parents and teachers. This is partly because the work is difficult and partly because of the low status generally accorded to those who work with children, compared to those who work with money, power, or ideas.

However, each time and place has its own unique problems with respect to the care and socialization of the young. The current "crisis" in child care seems to be the result of a combination of social trends unique to modern industrialized societies.

One of the major problems in this country is that the costs of raising children have gone up steeply. In the early years of this country each additional child born into a family represented an additional hand with the harvest or additional insurance of future support for a parent. By con-

trast, a child is now a large cost both to his parents and to the community. A study commissioned by the United States Commission on Population Growth and the American Future estimated that the cost of raising one child in the United States to age eighteen is $34,464. This figure goes up to $98,361 if one adds a college education and an estimate of the wages the mother "lost" by taking care of a child instead of holding a paying job. The study concludes: "Having a child will not only mean giving up one life style for another, but also potentially giving up one standard of living for another" (Reed and McIntosh, 1972: p. 342).

The status and treatment of children have also been affected by changes in adult sex roles, changes in the structure and functioning of the family, and changes in the pattern of life course or life-cycle transitions and in the pattern of relationships between the young and old.

Changes in Sex Roles which Downgrade Parenthood and Child Rearing

It is difficult to construct an image of the "traditional" role of the parent unbiased by analysts' opinions about what family life *should* be like. Historical analysis suggests that the American parental role has been characterized by, on the one hand, virtually total responsibility for the care and supervision of children, and on the other hand, relatively limited authority. "Only when a child reached age six did society at large take a major hand by insisting that he attend school and by providing schools at the taxpayers' expense. What happens to the child the rest of the time is his parents' business. Society intervenes only if he is severely abused or neglected or runs afoul of the law" (Schultze *et al.*, 1972: p. 253). At the same time, the dynamic, individualistic nature of American society gave family life a relatively temporary quality which limited the authority of parents. European visitors to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries noted not only that American children were indulged and had a position of relative equality and a say in family affairs which would have been unthinkable in Europe, but that American parents "give very little advice to their children and let them learn for themselves" (from Rousiers, *La Vie Americaine*, quoted in Sorel, 1950: p. 89).

Until recently, however, Americans have at least given lip service to the cliché that the presence of children strengthens the family. Now that central assumption seems to be in question. Data gathered during the last two decades show rather consistently that the presence of children has a negative rather than a positive effect upon the husband-wife relationships. Members of childless marriages report greater marital satisfaction than those with children; among marriages with children, the greater the number of children, the lower the satisfaction reported by the parents; and on a variety of marital satisfaction indices, satisfaction drops sharply with the birth of the first child, sinks even lower during the school years, and goes up markedly only after the exit of the last child (Converse and Campbell, 1975).

One explanation for the current discontinuities in the parent role is that life in most areas of our society does not allow young people to experience the role expectations and tasks of parenthood before they actually take on the role. (It should also be noted that parenthood is one of the few adult roles that can be taken on without presenting any kind of "credentials.") Our small nuclear families and increasingly age-segregated residential communities do not allow potential parents opportunities to observe young children or to communicate regularly with older persons with extensive parenting experience. By contrast with a society like Sweden, where boys and girls, from the elementary school years, have classes in sex education, home maintenance, child care, and the dynamics of family life (Linner, 1967), American schools offer little in the way of practical education in subjects relevant to family life. What preparation for parenthood exists during pregnancy is dependent upon the initiative of the parents-to-be and is largely confined to reading and informal consultation with friends. As Rossi (1968) points out, the most concrete action most parents-to-be take is to prepare the baby's room. The birth of the child thus constitutes an abrupt transition rather than a gradual taking on of the responsibilities of a new role. While there is a flood of advice from "experts" on every aspect of child development and care, the very existence of so much expertise may discourage rather than reassure the new parent, since it sets such a high level of expectations for their role performance. A recent review of a number of child-care books (Bane, 1973) concludes that most assume "enormous amounts of good will and understanding" on the part of parents, and perhaps demand "more time and energy

than most people have, and thus unwittingly contribute to parental anxiety and guilt."

Another explanation is that the responsibilities and skills involved in caring for young children are increasingly in conflict with other things adults value, both within and outside of marriage. Among the findings of the Detroit Area Study is that proportionately more women in the nineteen seventies than in the nineteen fifties said that companionship with husband was the most valuable part of marriage (sixty per cent in 1971 compared to forty-eight per cent in 1955); while fewer said their prime motive in marriage was the chance to have children (from twenty-six per cent in 1955 to thirteen per cent in 1971, Duncan *et al.*, 1973: p. 8). This seems to reflect a separation of the love-companionship aspects of marriage from the child-rearing aspects, with the presence of children having a negative rather than a positive aspect upon the former. Certainly the self-development which is an important component of an individualistic society is at variance with the constant attention and the frequent selflessness required in the nurturance of babies and young children. Likewise, the youthfulness and glamor which are so valued for both sexes in America are inconsistent with child-rearing.

Finally, parenthood may bring to the surface unresolved, and even unrecognized conflicts about the appropriate roles of men and women. However much in principle the couple may value sexual equalitarianism, the arrival of a child means that someone must be available twenty-four hours a day to care for it. It seems unlikely that current difficulties in the relationships between men and women in our society will be resolved until questions concerning both the value of children and the locus of responsibility for their routine care and supervision are acknowledged and resolved.

In addition to the problems peculiar to the parent role in general, the mother and father roles each have unique problems related to changes in sex roles in our society. Probably the most significant change in the pattern of women's lives is the ever-growing propensity of women with children to work outside the house (now a majority of American women with school-aged children and about a third of mothers of preschoolers).

While the percentages of women in the labor force at various phases of the life cycle varies from one country to another, what seems to be generally true is that working mothers have double work loads—they do their paid work *in addition to* carrying the major burdens of housework and child care. In a survey of working mothers in four Communist and six non-Communist countries conducted in 1972 and 1973 by Alice Cook, it was found that neither employers nor husbands were doing much to ease this double load. In every country:

> working mothers responded to the question, "what kind of help do you most need?" almost without exception by asking first for more and improved child care and then for opportunities to work part-time. It was quickly clear in most interviews that they were not thinking only of the pre-school child and of so-called child-care centers. They were asking for before-and after-school care, for care of sick children, and for some coverage for school vacations and holidays that cannot be meshed with work schedules (Cook, 1975: p. 30).

A second important kind of change in women's lives is in their orientation toward motherhood itself. Theorists of all branches of the women's movement have argued that the primary reason for women's second-class status is their responsibility for children, and as women come to think more highly of themselves, it is predictable that they will be less willing to perform the tasks in the society that carry less weight and prestige, including the more tedious aspects of child care.

The effect upon children of their mother's employment has been heatedly debated, the claims more often based upon the writer's personal biases than upon any substantial body of empirical evidence. There are some Swedish studies showing no substantial or consistent differences in either school achievement or social adjustment between children whose mothers work outside the home and those who do not, although there are more problems if the mother has to work for economic reasons than if she is working for "professional enthusiasm" (Leijon, 1968: p. 98). The most thorough analyses of the available American research (Hoffman, 1974; Lein, 1974) conclude that there is no unequivocal evidence that outside employment of mothers affect children favorably or unfavorably. "So many other factors enter into the picture—social class, full-time versus part-time employment, age and sex of the child, and the mother's attitude toward the employment—that the impact of employment *per se* is lost in the shuffle" (Bernard, 1972: p. 78).

The role of the father has received relatively little attention in the sociological literature. The

most recent full-length sociological analysis (Benson, 1968) notes that the father role links the family with the larger society, and has been the embodiment within the family of the social control function. Until recently he has not had much to do with the housekeeping and childrearing functions. Benson also points out the distinction between biological and social fatherhood, and notes that these two functions have not always been filled by the same man. The latter was a social invention which has taken a variety of forms in different societies. Children have been raised in the home of their mother's relatives, and have been provided for by their uncles, stepfathers, and older brothers as well as by their biological fathers. Benson concludes that: "The biological father, the progenitor is not as important as the social or nurturant father precisely because the latter has a family role to play after conception" (Benson, 1968: p. 44).

One of the problems in the United States and other industrialized societies is that the social father role is not being filled in many families by the biological father or any other male. In 1970 about ten per cent of all children under age fourteen were being raised in families in which the father was absent (White House Conference on Children, 1970: pp. 22, 141), and this figure is now over fifteen per cent. While some of these children undoubtedly have meaningful relationships with men other than their biological fathers, studies of lower class "streetcorner" men, such as Liebow's *Talley's Corner* (1966) and Hannerz's *Soulside* (1969) show how peripheral these men are to the lives of children. One explanation for the streetcorner man's lack of welcome in the homes where their children are raised is that they have failed to achieve occupational status and security. Unlike the mother's, the father's position in the family is strongly related to his position in systems outside of the family. Komarovsky's study of unemployed blue-collar workers (1971) showed how the loss of a man's job led to the decline of his position *vis-à-vis* his wife and children.

While there have been some recent pleas for a "return to fatherhood" in this country, it is not possible with the currently available research to conclude whether fatherhood was a more fully developed role in the past. It is true that households and communities in which a man's work was typically in or near his home allowed a father to be in contact with his children more often during the normal course of a work day than in our present metropolitan areas where the place of work is usually at a distance from the home (and the time added on to the work day by commuting often cancels out any time advantages won by the trend toward shorter hours of work). However, the distance imposed by the more authoritarian character of the father role in the past may have outweighed the advantages gained by mere physical proximity. It should also be noted that the call for greater activation of the father role can be differently interpreted. Male writers calling for a "return to fatherhood" are usually expressing nostalgia for the undisputed authority of the male head of the household attributed to the traditional families of the past. Women, on the other hand, are usually asking not for a return to a form of family life perceived by them as oppressive for both women and children but rather: (*a*) for men to show more interest in and affection for young children; and (*b*) for a more equitable distribution of the more onerous duties involved in caring for them.

Rhetoric to the contrary, there is little evidence of a strong trend toward male caretakers of young children. The few well-publicized cases of "paternity leave," where fathers have won the right to spend more time at home caring for their children without the loss of their job or its fringe benefits, have so far been limited to a few occupations, such as teaching, that allow relatively flexible working schedules. Scandinavian corporations and agencies which allow men to work less than full-time in order to share domestic responsibilities with their wives report that few men have so far taken advantage of the "opportunity" (interviews with Siv Thorsell, Anita Soderlund). Although it is now Swedish policy to recruit men into day care center positions, in centers I visited in 1973 I observed few men, never more than one to a center, and the few I met were conscientious objectors or an occasional older man who was for some reason unemployed. (Of course the Swedish policy is so new that it is unfair to draw conclusions about its success, and developments there should be followed.) I observed no men in any of the day care centers or kibbutz children's homes I visited in Israel, and some of the Israeli men I questioned actually recoiled at the notion that men might work in such places. Mirra Komarovsky's current studies of American college men indicate that, while many give lip service to the general principle of equality

and liberation for women, most assume that *their* future wives will stay home with the children during their pre-school years and arrange her working schedule around their school hours if she later goes to work. "Though they were willing to aid their wives in varying degrees, they frequently excluded specific tasks, for instance, 'not the laundry,' 'not the cleaning,' 'not the diapers,' and so on" (Komarovsky, 1973: p. 879).

In sum, the ideology concerning the role of the father does seem to be changing in modern societies, but there is still a large gap between the rhetoric of a more active, equalitarian role and the actual behavior of men in the role. Nor do we have the institutional arrangements which would allow—and motivate—men to change their role behavior. Women, on the other hand, no longer feel that they should be solely responsible for the day-to-day care of young children, work which has in the past always been done by the persons with relatively low status in the society. Thus, whether or not one views the relationships between men and women as "political," there is a clear conflict of interest between the sexes with regard to the allocation of child care responsibilities.

Changes in the Structure and Functioning of the Family

Social historians like Peter Laslett and John Demos have in recent years been reconstructing the size and structure of households in the past and their findings contradict some of our romantic notions about the way families "used to be." Large extended families have always been rare. Laslett's research on the pre-industrial family in England (1971) shows an average family size of about five for over three centuries, with few households larger than a dozen. It is true, however, that households used to contain apprentices, servants, and other persons not related by blood. They were also more likely to contain children of a greater range of ages and the male head of the household, since his work was often in or near the home.

As economists have pointed out, the care of young children, an activity which requires full-time availability but not full-time attention and action, is most "efficiently" carried out in a setting in which other activities are also being carried out. The American home during the colonial and frontier periods was such a setting.

As long as other activities are going on in the household—cleaning, cooking, or specialized activity for sale on the market, like working on the family farm—the extra time cost of having children around is less than it would be for an organization specializing in child care. Besides time, the space needed for child care often is costless in the home where it is needed anyway (for sleeping, cooking, etc.) (Nelson and Krashinsky, 1972: p. 3).

In sum, while there is no evidence that homes in the past were consciously organized for the care of children—in fact, children were less likely to be considered full human beings worthy of love and care than they are now (Aries, 1962; de Mause, 1974)—the economic and other functions of the home necessitated an organization which, at the same time, assured that a number of persons were available to share in looking after children. Most of these functions have been lost to the family, and at the same time, the close of the frontier, the decrease in the proportion of the population engaged in farming, and the enactment of compulsory education and child labor laws have removed many arrangements outside of the home which relieved parents of some of the burdens of child-rearing.

Intensive case studies of American families (e.g., the interviews of middle-income Boston-area families conducted by Lein *et al.*, 1974) reveal that many families are experiencing a great deal of stress in trying to coordinate their work and child-care activities and express considerable anxiety about the kind of job they are doing as parents. While the two-parent nuclear family is still considered the norm in this country, there is, in fact, a good deal of variation in family structure, some of it a response to difficulties in fulfilling the responsibilities of parenthood. Over fifteen per cent of the children in the United States are in one-parent households (this percentage is much higher in cities and among certain racial-ethnic subgroups) and at least another five per cent are in households with several adults. The latter includes everything from communes and other pseudofamilial arrangements to extended families which young parents often join in the hope of getting help with the care of children. The five per cent figure is probably an underestimate, but such households are hard to enumerate accurately since people in such situations are often vague or evasive to interviewers (Benjamin Zablocki, personal communications).

Children in the Age Stratification System

Childhood constitutes one stratum in a complex age stratification system. In our society, persons

of different ages have unequal opportunities. The youngest and oldest age strata have comparatively little power and responsibility, comparatively great amounts of leisure, and are increasingly segregated in age-homogeneous institutions and other settings. Unlike the pre-industrial family, which typically contained persons from a cross-section of the stages of the life cycle, the model nuclear family is now limited to husband and wife (when both are present), usually near each other in age, and a couple of children, also near each other in age and separated from their parents by a generation gap. Ironically, this miniature two-generation unit places a heavy burden on the parents, especially the mother, since there is no one to share in such tasks as looking after young children.

As Demos points out, such an age structure makes the passage from one stage of the life cycle to another difficult:

> (1) There are major "discontinuities" between the generations; the common experiences of children and adults are radically different from one another. (2) The culture itself is enormously varied and complex. Thus the young person approaching adulthood confronts a bewildering array of alternatives as to career, values, life style, and so forth. In this overall context adolescence brings a deeply rooted cluster of fears and resentments, and a host of ominous questions: "Can I effectively bridge the gap?" "Will I be able to make the right basic choices?" "Or, for that matter, do I *want* to?"
>
> In seventeenth century Plymouth, by contrast, and indeed in all communities of the time, the environmental setting was much simpler—and the process of growth inherently less difficult. Once the child had begun to assume an adult role and style, around the age of six or seven, the way ahead was fairly straightforward. Development toward full maturity could be accomplished in a gradual, piecemeal, and largely automatic fashion. There were few substantial choices to be made: the boy's own father, or the girl's own mother, provided relatively clear models for the formation of a meaningful "identity." Here was no "awkward age"—but rather the lengthening of a young person's shadow, and the whole instinctive process through which one generation yielded imperceptibly to its successor" (Demos, 1970: p. 150).

RESEARCH ON THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF CHILDHOOD

In the course of studying the literature and gathering data, several problems relating to research about children and child care become evident. First is that virtually all studies of children have been done by adults. There is no body of research on children in which the data have been gathered or analyzed by children themselves or in which children have had anything to say about the theoretical framework or the research design. Most adults would, I assume, see nothing peculiar in this state of affairs, but it should be noted that our view of children is, in essence, an "outsider's" view. The kinds of differences in perception and presentation are suggested by Merton's conceptualization of "Insiders" and "Outsiders" (1973). In connection with research on race and race relations, Merton notes that not only do Insider and Outsider scholars have "significantly different foci of interest," reflecting their different locations in the social structure, but that each "will inquire into problems relevant to the distinctive values and interests which they share with members of ***their*** group" (Merton, 1973: pp. 106–107). Merton goes on to point out that, while neither side is free from ethnocentrism and chauvinism, research dominated by an Outsider point of view, when the Outsider position is at the same time the dominant one (e.g., whites with respect to blacks, males with respect to females, and adults with respect to children), tends toward a glorification of the ingroup and a kind of "sociological euphemism" which may mask conflict, exploitation and segregation.

This one-sided view of children is intensified by the fact that all students of children are themselves former children, and their views of children and childhood are colored by their own experiences. The biases to which we are all subject are succinctly expressed by Lillian Hellman in her memoir *Pentimento*. The reason that "the tales of former children are seldom to be trusted," says Hellman, is that they are likely to be exaggerated in one of two ways. "Some people supply too many past victories or pleasures with which to comfort themselves, and other people cling to pains, real and imagined, to excuse what they have become" (Hellman, 1973: p. 92).

It is commonly believed that the study of children should be done only by "professional" researchers. Most researchers doubt the credibility of children as accurate reporters of their own activities and ideas, let alone as active participants in the research process. Our experience has not supported this bias. On the contrary, we have found that some children can only be reached by other children. For example, in a Head Start program in a small city in upper New York State, angry and hostile black children who would not respond to any adult of either sex or race

spoke freely to child interviewers. This is consistent with some findings reported on seriously withdrawn institutionalized children who failed to respond to adult therapists but began to open up when other children were brought into the room.

Merton's discussion and our own experience have, however, led us to expect some systematic *differences* in the perception and reporting of daily life experiences by children to children and to non-children. Our impression is that children present themselves to, and are perceived by other children as more competent and self-sufficient than they appear to most adults. We also predict that children will over-report interaction with adults and under-report interaction with children to adult interviewers, and the reverse to child interviewers. We are thus attempting to measure in a more precise way the differing views of children obtained by persons of different ages and the relative strengths and weaknesses of data gathered by children and adults. During the next two years, we plan to gather data from samples of four- and seven-year-olds in a variety of settings, including a high- and low-income neighborhood of New York City, a smaller city in New York State, one or two new towns which have made systematic efforts to plan housing and community facilities to maximize family life, suburbs which contain high proportions of families with pre-school children and both parents employed outside the home, and some rural areas of upper New York State and New England.

In each setting we plan to recruit "indigenous" data gathers—i.e., interviewers who will be trained by our project staff but who will be residents of the neighborhood or community. In a few settings we also hope to have some rather extensive observational data gathered by trained observers for comparison with the interview data.

The main thrust of the project will be methodological. We will be primarily concerned with the feasibility of designing research to collect substantial amounts of reliable data about the lives of children and that of involving children more actively in the study of their own lives. Since we are limiting ourselves to a few sites during this phase, there will clearly be limitations on the substantive generalizations that can be made about children's lives in the United States at large. We will, however, attempt to define our potential populations and to draw our samples so that we can say something about the range of settings and children's life styles in this country. We continue to be surprised at how little is known about the ordinary daily patterns of children's lives and how decisions about day care and other services for children and parents continue to be made in the absence of systematic information on the choices that children and their parents have already made about their lives. We think that our data will not only inform us about the differences in perspectives upon children's lives obtained by data-gatherers of different ages, but will also help to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about children's utilization of time, their attitudes toward adults and peers, their competences, their likes and dislikes, and may help us to identify meaningful points of transition in children's lives and important changes and/or differences in life styles.

I continue to be haunted by the limited and biased view we hold of the competences of children and by the fact that our developmental theories of children may contribute to this limited view. In recent consultation with Polish researchers who were planning a kind of replication of the Coleman Report for Polish children, we were frustrated by the fact that standardized tests of school competency still tend to be limited to a narrow range of cognitive skills. My interest in testing this notion experimentally was sparked by findings from the work of Matilda White Riley and her associates on aging (1968 and 1972; comparisons of the status and treatment of the oldest and youngest age strata in our society reveal many important analogies). Experimentation on a variety of physical and mental skills has indicated that, contrary to the commonly held notion that such skills decline routinely as a function of the physiological aging process, differential competence is as strongly correlated with expectations, opportunities, and other components of the social context as with age *per se*. It occurs to me that similar processes may operate for children. Such processes are suggested in the work of the "radical" critics of the school system, such as John Holt, James Herndon, Herbert Kohl, and Jonathan Kozol, although most of their evidence is anecdotal rather than experimental. For example, in *The Way it Spozed to Be*, Herndon (1968) cites the case of a twelve-year old boy who is unable to perform simple addition and subtraction in a school context, but nevertheless earns spending money by keeping the scores of a local bowling team. Believing he

has hit upon a solution, Herndon asks the boy to keep the score of an imaginary bowling game in the school. But the boy makes a series of errors. Herndon's example suggests processes of greater complexity—and a more sociological argument—than radical ideology generally admits. It suggests not that children are made stupid by school in the general psychological sense of that word, but rather that children display stupid behavior in school and intelligent behavior outside school. Many children master tasks of great complexity outside of school, while in school these same children become unintelligent, incapable of thought, and in John Holt's words, "following meaningless procedures to obtain meaningless answers to meaningless questions." We are currently in the process of designing some experiments which will test the relationships between age and competence among children, allowing a wider range of skills than are conventionally tested, and seeing whether variations in social context will produce differential performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The status of children in our society is ambiguous. Compared with less-industrialized societies and with our own society in earlier periods, childhood is a more fully differentiated phase of the life cycle, but the integration of the young into the larger society, particularly their contribution to the productive life of the community, is at a low level. While there does seem to be increasing awareness of the needs of children, there is at the same time a declining interest among many adults in spending time, money, and other resources on them.

Part of the problem may be our tendency to attack the problems of one age stratum with too little consideration of the implication for other strata. For example, many of the statements made by government officials and child-care professionals about what we "must" do for children imply that making life better for children will automatically improve things for adults, or at least not be costly to them. Our work indicates that, on the contrary, the ever rising level of expectations for the care and education of children, not to mention the well-documented rise in the costs of bearing and rearing children, is in conflict with the interest of increasing numbers of adults. Women in particular are displaying greater interest in self-development and in modes of life that are not consistent with even greater investment of time and energy in child-bearing and child-rearing. Moreover, there are studies (e.g., Ruderman, 1968) showing that different sectors of our society (parents, day care professionals, labor leaders, businessmen, clergymen, etc.) hold widely differing views about the locus of responsibility for children and what constitutes adequate care. The general point is that policy issues in this area cannot even be formulated accurately, let alone resolved, unless one is willing to consider how a given child-care program or arrangement will affect men, women, and children, the childless as well as those engaged in child-rearing.

Finally, I feel that the full range of children's competencies tends to be underestimated, and that as a group they are underemployed. Without wishing to return to an era of exploitative child labor, which was quite appropriately ended by child-labor and compulsory education laws, I wonder whether we can afford the type of child-rearing arrangements which keep the young as a kind of expensive consumer item and which require large numbers of women to live isolated lives in homes which have no function except the care of one or two young children. I propose that the challenge for the sociology of childhood and for social policy concerning children is not only to devise innovative modes of child care, but also to develop innovative modes of measuring, developing, and utilizing the full range of children's capacities.

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THE VALUE OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS AND THE DECREASE IN FAMILY SIZE[1]

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(Read April 25, 1975, in the Symposium on the Ecology of Child Development)

A COMMON VIEW, held even among many demographers, is that America has achieved zero population growth, or will do so very soon. This view is based on the decline in the birth rate since the late 1960's and the results of the recent surveys showing that young wives plan to have fewer children. According to the 1972 Gallup Poll, for example, the average ideal family size reported by white women under twenty-five was 2.7—lower than any previous Gallup survey going back to 1936, and compared to a high of 3.5 in 1963 (Blake, 1974). In fact, based on the declining birth rate and their own studies of *"expected* family size" the United States Bureau of the Census has lowered its population projections for the United States. There seems, then, to be general agreement that family size in the United States will continue its downward trend, leveling off at an average of no more than two children.

All of this, however, is based on extrapolation. We are, I think, reasonably assured that there will be a decrease in unplanned and unwanted births because of improved methods of birth control, liberalized abortion laws, and increased acceptance of birth planning even among Catholics. But when we go on to predict how many children people will want in the future, I believe we are on very shaky ground. We have no idea why the desired family size is down, so how do we know it will stay down?

Americans may want fewer children, for example, because of the recession and the prevailing pessimism about economic conditions. If so, prosperity or even economic optimism could change the current attitude toward family size. Or, perhaps the desire for fewer children is a reflection of the current public concern with overpopulation. If so, we might see a return to previous, higher fertility rates when the attention of the mass media to this problem dies down.

In both of these examples, the assumption is that the basic desire for children remains unchanged and that current obstacles are leading people to settle for fewer children; thus removal of these obstacles would result in an upswing in family size. A different view is that people do not want as many children as previously because whatever needs are involved in wanting children are being satisfied in some other way. It is possible, for example, that the drop has resulted from new alternatives to children such as the increased acceptance of jobs and careers for women. These new roles may mean that fewer children are needed for a satisfying life. Even this, of course, is not necessarily a *permanent* change. What if jobs for women become scarce?

The point is that if we do not understand what motivational factors lie behind the desire for children we are in no position to predict—let alone affect—fertility trends. We live in a dynamic society. To predict birth rates, rather than merely to extrapolate from recent trends, we need to understand the underlying motivations and to analyze these motivations in relation to other social conditions. In my current research at the University of Michigan I am doing this by analyzing the needs that children satisfy, as well as the costs—both emotional and financial—that are involved in parenthood.

In my talk today I want to explain first the theoretical scheme guiding the research and then present some data from a very recent national survey of married couples in the United States.

The focus of the study is the value of children to parents. By this I mean the needs they fulfill, the satisfactions they provide, why people want them. In a theoretical paper by Hoffman and Hoffman (1973), the many motivations for having children—across different societies—were culled from the literature and organized according to a set of relatively homogeneous psychological needs. The value of children lay in their capacity to satisfy one or more of these needs. The final

[1] The research reported here was supported by Grant # HD 08287, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

scheme consists of nine categories or basic values. These are listed in table 1. It is intended as an all-inclusive system, capable of incorporating the many satisfactions that children provide in the various cultures.

Let me describe some of the values. Take the first—the idea that having children satisfies a need for attaining adult status and a social identity.

More than finishing school, going to work, or even getting married, parenthood establishes a person as a truly mature, stable, and acceptable member of the community and provides his access to other institutions of adult society. This is particularly true for women, for whom motherhood is also defined as their major role in life. It is not only that the mass media present all "adjusted" adult women as mothers, or that popular opinion stresses this view, it is also that in the United States as elsewhere not many acceptable alternative roles are available especially for lower class, uneducated women. Furthermore, females are typically socialized with the expectation that they will become mothers, and this is the major role that the child growing up in the nuclear family sees the mother enacting. The occupational pursuits of both parents are unreal to the child because they are enacted away from the home but the mother's role at home is visible and, particularly when the children are young, more heavily stressed than any paid employment she might also have. The childhood fantasies of girls include being a mother; from an early age they view motherhood as the essence of being a woman and young children often find the concept of being an adult without children difficult to comprehend. Across societies, motherhood is seen as the normal culmination of the socialization process and both males and females attain adulthood and a social identity through parenthood.

TABLE 1

THE VALUE OF CHILDREN

1. Adult status and social identity (included here is the concept that motherhood is woman's major role)
2. Expansion of the self, tie to larger entity, "immortality"
3. Morality: religion, altruism, good of the group, regarding sexuality, impulsivity, virtue, character norms building
4. Primary group ties, affection
5. Stimulation, novelty, fun
6. Achievement, competence, creativity
7. Power, influence, effectance
8. Social comparison, competition
9. Economic-utility

Turning to the next value—expansion of the self—the need here is perhaps a response to the evanescent quality of life. Many people feel a need to anchor themselves beyond their own lifetime. Having children may satisfy this need because it is a way of reproducing oneself, having one's characteristics reflected in another who will live longer, and thus attaining a kind of immortality. The "carrying on of the family name" and the "continuation of the family" are reasons for wanting children that are included in this category.

Children are a tie to the past, also, in that the parent passes on much that he received from his own parents—values, folklore, songs—to his children—thus establishing a continuity between the past and the future.

Children also help expand the parent's self-conception by evoking new, previously untapped, dimensions of personality.

The moral value of children can be expressed through formal religions, and most religions have some pronatalist aspect; often children are required for carrying out important rites after one is dead. But the moral value can also be expressed in terms of the feeling of self-worth that comes from carrying out the parent role. Motherhood is almost synonymous with virtue and being a good father is an enormous source of self-respect that may conpensate for other felt shortcomings.

Value 7, power, may be less obvious. In some cultures parenthood dramatically changes the power of a person, particularly the mother. In the villages in India for example, the new bride moves into the household of her husband's family, where she lives in a subservient role to her mother-in-law. Only by bearing sons does she gain some control over her own life, over her childless sisters-in-law; and eventually, when her sons bring home brides she will herself become the powerful and dominating mother-in-law (Poffenberger and Poffenberger, 1973). Even in America motherhood often gives the low-powered wife the courage to make demands and enables her to have more influence with her husband and his family—partly "for the sake of the children."

Children also afford parents unique opportunities for another form of power—the chance to guide, teach, control, and generally exert enor-

mous influence over another human being. The parents control the material and emotional supplies needed by the child and they are for a considerable period physically stronger and allowed by law to use physical coercion to impose their will. The power of a parent over a child is indeed almost without parallel.

There is still another aspect of power: having a child is one way to have an effect—an impact—on one's own life and that of others.

In addition to the values, the theoretical model contains two other concepts that are important. The first, called alternatives, pertains to the other things—besides children—that might satisfy the same needs. For while each of these value categories deals with a need that children satisfy, there are other relationships and social institutions that might also provide satisfaction. Variation in family size may be due, in part, to the presence or absence of alternative ways to satisfy the needs that children satisfy. Consider the Indian village in which the economic-utility value (Value 9 in table 1) is very high and the most common reason for wanting sons is to have someone to take care of one in old age. The villagers report that, if they do not have a son to take care of them, they will starve. There is no alternative. Since the mortality rate is high and the child must be a son, to feel confident you will have a living son when you are sixty-five takes a lot of children. In this case a government provision for old-age security would greatly reduce the value of children by providing an alternative. Or, using the United States as an example, fewer alternatives are available to lower socio-economic groups for satisfying power or achievement needs and thus the value of children may be comparatively greater in this group. As a final example, one explanation for the baby boom of the nineteen fifties is that the role of housewife lost much of its potential for making a women feel creative and competent; consequently, the other traditional role of women—motherhood—may have been enhanced (Hoffman and Wyatt, 1960).

In addition to values and alternatives there is the concept of costs, which refers simply to what must be given up to obtain a value in any particular way. The cost of children is usually expressed in economic terms, or as the loss of freedom, or as anxieties about the child's health and development.

The translation of these concepts—values, alternatives, costs—to fertility motivation is not simple and direct. Though all the values are relevant to fertility, certain ones will contribute to the desire to have some children rather than none, others to have a new baby, and still others will be tied to a desire for many children. Which response is called forth by the value may also be affected by the surrounding circumstances. For example, where social mobility is low and there is little possibility for the child to achieve, satisfying the achievement value may require having many children—one's achievement being the sheer number of them. On the other hand, "my son, the doctor" represents the child as an achievement with the emphasis on quality.

To relate this model to the current preference for smaller families in the United States, we must consider whether the change is due to increased costs, and if so we must identify which costs, for it is not only the financial costs that may have increased. Or, it may be that an alternative to satisfying a need through having children has arisen. To return to the example suggested earlier, we can see that almost all of the nine value categories might be satisfied to some extent by jobs for women. Once we understand the value of children and the costs, we are in a better position to analyze future trends in the birth rate, as well as to predict certain discontents that may result if the birth rate does continue to drop.

The theoretical framework I have outlined is the basis for a cross-national study now underway. National sample studies are being carried out in Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Turkey, and the United States, and a stratified-sample study in Indonesia. The investigators have agreed on a core set of interview questions which will be used in each country. The respondents in each country are to be women under forty, married or at least semi-permanently cohabiting with a man. In about a quarter of the sample, the husbands will also be interviewed. The field work for the United States study was recently completed; the Indonesian study is still under way; and the other countries will start the data collection in a few months.

In the United States, we used the facilities of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, which maintains a nation-wide staff of interviewers. The sample consists of 1,569 women and 456 of their husbands and is a statistical representation of the country, excluding Hawaii and Alaska. Data on the value and costs of children were elicited in a variety of ways.

Most of the data are still being coded, but some analyses have been completed for this presentation. These findings are for the full sample of mothers and their husbands but the respondents who did not have any children are excluded from this report. (Most of the excluded respondents, those without children, are the recently married.) The data I will present, then, are from a current, representative sample of mothers, under forty, living with husbands, in the continental United States.

The first set of data is based on the answers to this question: "What would you say are some of the advantages or good things about having children, compared with not having children at all?" The item was the first one in the interview after the respondent had identified everyone living in the household. Thus the answers are completely open and unaffected by any other part of the interview. There was a wide range of answers: Sixty-five different types of responses were coded, a maximum of four per person.

One of the purposes of the cross-national study is to see whether the nine value categories shown on the first slide are all-inclusive across cultures. On the basis of extensive pre-test data, it would appear that they are.[2] In table 2 the results for the women in the United States are reported. The sixty-five specific codes have been grouped here according to the nine values. The left column gives the percentage of mothers who gave at least one response in that category. Thus, 21.9% mentioned as an advantage of having children something which seemed to satisfy a need for adult status and social identity. This includes answers like "When you become a mother, people really treat you like you're an adult for the first time" or "If you weren't a mother, you'd feel funny—you'd be a real odd-ball. You wouldn't belong" or "What would I do all day if I didn't have children? I can clean this place and get meals in two hours and after that I'd just sit around and do nothing."

TABLE 2

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHILDREN
Reported by Married Women Under 40 with at Least One Child; National Sample of the United States

Values	% persons who gave such a response	% persons who did not give response	Total %
Adult status and social identity	21.9	78.1	100
Expansion of the self	35.2	64.8	100
Morality	6.8	93.2	100
Primary group ties and affection	66.2	33.8	100
Stimulation and fun	60.1	39.9	100
Achievement and competence	11.0	89.0	100
Power	2.2	97.8	100
Social comparison	0.1	99.9	100
Economic-utility	7.9	92.1	100

$N = 1258$

The most prevalent value of children seems to be the category called "Primary group ties and affection." That is, 66.2% of the women gave answers that indicated that children satisfied their desire for love and the feeling of being in a family. The pretest data from the Asian countries also showed this as the most common response with the exception of Thailand and the rural areas of the Philippines where economic-utility was a more prevalent value. A close second in importance in the United States is "Stimulation and fun." This included statements like "There is always something going on," "They bring a liveliness to your life," "We love playing with them," "They're fun," "They're so funny," "They keep you young," "They bring happiness and joy," "We love just watching them grow—its like a built-in change so that each year is a little different from the one before," "They make you forget your worries."

Certain categories that are low in the United States are expected from our pretests to be higher in other countries. Thus economic-utility is much higher in other countries—particularly those that are predominantly rural. In the United States, by the way, this answer is given more often by Black respondents than by other groups. Some values, like "Power," and to some extent "Social-comparison" are low partly because these are not advantages of children that are readily elicited in open-ended questions. We

[2] In the United States study a category called Ego-boost was added to code some responses that could not be placed in any of the nine value categories. These include answers like "You can teach them things"—which might involve creativity or power or some other value but it is not possible to tell without a fuller answer. It also includes "to have someone who thinks you're great," "to have someone who respects you" and "simply to know that they are ours." Whether these answers require the addition of a new value or simply involve a mixture of several of the nine values is not yet clear. Three and a half per cent of the women and four and a half per cent of the men gave such responses.

TABLE 3

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHILDREN
Reported by Men with Wives Under 40 with at Least One Child

Values	% persons who gave such a response	% persons who did not give response	Total %
Adult status and social identity	19.8	80.2	100
Expansion of the self	32.4	67.6	100
Morality	6.4	93.6	100
Primary group ties and affection	60.1	39.9	100
Stimulation and fun	55.3	44.7	100
Achievement and competence	9.5	90.5	100
Power	2.2	97.8	100
Social comparison	.3	99.7	100
Economic-utility	10.1	89.9	100

$N = 358$

hope that some of our other less direct measures will obtain data on these values.

TABLE 4

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHILDREN
Most Frequent Specific Responses of Married Women Under 40 with at Least One Child and their Husbands; National Sample of the United States

Response[a]	% women who gave such a response	% men who gave such a response
Adult status and social identity (women's role)		
It's socially expected	6.3	—[b]
You feel adult; shows you are a responsible person	6.2	6.7
To have something useful to do	8.5	—[b]
Expansion of self		
Purpose to life	13.5	11.2
Learning experience	10.8	6.7
To recreate myself—a child like me	—[b]	6.7
Primary group ties and affection		
Love and companionship	34.2	23.7
To give love	12.0	10.9
To make a family	16.2	21.8
Establish or express unity with spouse	13.1	11.7
Stimulation and fun		
Stimulation, fun, joy	51.3	47.5
Pleasure from watching them grow	16.1	16.8
N	1258	358

[a] Maximum of 4 responses coded per person.
[b] Response not frequent for that sex.

In table 3, the same analysis is reported for men. The general pattern is not very different from that of the wives. Primary group ties, stimulation and fun, and expansion of the self still lead the list.

In table 4, we are still talking about the same question—the advantages of having rather than not having children—but here the table presents data for the more common specific responses. The stimulation-and-fun category included other specifically coded responses but the most common are the two listed. That is, just over half the sample stated that children provide stimulation, fun or joy; and 16 per cent specifically mentioned the pleasure gained from watching them grow. For primary group ties, four specific response categories were common: first, that love and companionship are provided by children; second a closely related category—the opportunity to give love to someone; third, the idea that children make a family, that holidays would be nothing without children and the family feeling they bring; and the fourth listed—the idea that children express the love between husband and wife or bind the marriage. As we shall see later, the very answers given as advantages may be given by other people as disadvantages. Thus, for some, children solidify the husband-wife relationship; others see children as an interference.

One of the top ten *specific* responses given by women was that if a woman did not have children she would have nothing to do, or at least nothing useful to do. Over 8½ per cent of the mothers gave this answer. Although this does not seem high, it is noteworthy when we consider these answers are spontaneous responses to a very open question. If one took any of these answers and listed them and asked whether these were advantages, the percentages of people agreeing would undoubtedly be much higher. This answer is particularly interesting in the light of the concept of alternatives to having children. If over 8½ per cent of the women see motherhood as a way of avoiding inactivity, then the alternative provided by the new occupational roles may be significant indeed.

Let me leave the value of children to discuss their costs. After the question about advantages, a parallel question was asked: "What are some of the disadvantages or bad things about having children, compared with not having children?" Table 5 reports the responses given by the mothers. As you can see, the most common one,

exceeding even the financial costs, is the loss of freedom. This includes a variety of responses all revolving around the idea that children tie one down or in some way restrict the parent's activities. It can be seen in another table, however, that there is a difference between saying this is a disadvantage and saying this disadvantage is important enough to affect how many children a person has. In the later table we shall see that although loss of freedom is a constant complaint, it is less important than either financial costs or overpopulation in affecting family size—for this group, at least, all of whom already have at least one child. The disadvantage question asks for disadvantages about having children compared with not having children. Thus, I may find when I analyze the respondents who have no children that loss of freedom plays a more important part in the decision about the first than in the decision about any subsequent child.

Just under "Loss of freedom" you can see that fewer than 5½ per cent said that children interfere with the relationship between the husband and wife. This is smaller, of course, than the 13 per cent who mentioned children as beneficial to the marital relationship. The next three costs listed are "worries." Three different kinds of worries are reported. One is the kind parents have probably always had about their children's physical health and well-being. Another kind of worry involves the parent being concerned about whether or not she is doing an adequate job. And the third involves some reference to the "troubled world." This includes both a concern that no matter how good a job you do as parent, your children may turn out badly because the current world is so fraught with troubles—like drugs, crime, long hair, wars, and pollution; it also includes a somewhat less specific reference like "Why bring children into the world today; it's all such a mess."

TABLE 5

DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHILDREN
Reported by Married Women Under 40 with at Least One Child; National Sample of the United States

Costs	% persons who gave such a response	% persons who did not give response	Total %
Financial costs	39.9	60.1	100
Interfere with mother's working	6.6	93.4	100
Loss of freedom	52.9	47.1	100
Interfere with marital relationship	5.4	94.6	100
Traditional worries—health, safety, etc.	19.8	80.2	100
Worry about own ability as parent	4.8	95.2	100
Worry because of the "troubled world"	6.1	93.9	100
Specific aspects of job named as unpleasant	9.9	90.1	100
Children are lazy	2.6	97.4	100
Overpopulation	.3	99.7	100
$N = 1258$			

TABLE 6

DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHILDREN
Reported by Men with Wives Under 40 with at Least One Child; National Sample of the United States

Costs	% persons who gave such a response	% persons who did not give response	Total %
Financial costs	44.7	55.3	100
Interfere with mother's working	1.1	98.9	100
Loss of freedom	48.6	51.4	100
Interfere with marital relationship	4.7	95.3	100
Traditional worries—health, safety, etc.	19.3	80.7	100
Worry about own ability as parent	3.4	96.6	100
Worry because of the "troubled world"	7.5	92.5	100
Specific aspects of job named as unpleasant	9.2	90.8	100
Children are lazy	1.7	98.3	100
Overpopulation	.3	99.7	100
$N = 358$			

The next category includes answers where the respondent names some specific aspect of the parent role—like changing diapers or disciplining. The last two disadvantages are that children are lazy and do not help in the house, and finally, overpopulation—named as a disadvantage by only .3 per cent.

The data for the men are very similar except that as we might expect the men talk more than the women about the financial disadvantages and less about the loss of freedom.

The last two tables may be the most directly relevant to the question raised at the beginning: how permanent is the decreased family size in the United States? Respondents were asked how many children they would like to have. They were then asked "Can you tell me some of the reasons you would not want to have *more* than that number?" Thus, if the respondent wanted only one

TABLE 7

FIVE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR EACH FAMILY SIZE PREFERENCE
Per Cent of Mothers Under 40, Living with Husband, Who Gave Response
Can you tell me some of the reasons you would not want to have more than (whatever number children *R* wants)?

Reasons*	One		Two		Three		Four		Five	
	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned
Financial matters generally	46.6	53.4	67.2	32.8	71.7	28.3	67.0	33.0	42.3	57.7
Cost of education			8.1	91.9	9.3	90.7	8.1	91.9		
To be able to give to child			7.9	92.1						
Overpopulation			9.1	90.9						
Couldn't cope with more; not enough strength			8.5	91.5	9.6	90.4				
That's all we can handle (not clear why)							10.2	89.8		
Wife's health									6.2	93.8
Wife's job	6.8	93.2								
To avoid pregnancy	8.2	91.8								
Wife too old	13.7	86.3			8.1	91.9	11.7	88.3	9.2	90.8
To give child enough attention	6.8	93.2			8.1	91.9			6.9	93.1
That's a good number; enough for me							7.1	92.9	11.5	88.5
N		73		516		322		197		130

* Maximum of three responses per person.

child she was asked "Can you tell me some of the reasons you would not want to have more than one child?" In table 7, the answer to the question is reported for each group. The first two columns (under "One") indicate the five most common answers given by the seventy-three women who wanted only one child. Most women, of course, wanted two children and the five most common answers given by them are reported in the next two columns.

As can be seen, the overwhelming reason for not wanting more children is financial. The top row, called "financial matters generally," included statements that they could not afford more, or sometimes specific references to the current situation like "with unemployment so high we're afraid we wouldn't have the money for any more" or "the cost of living is so high that's all we can afford." The two rows following "financial matters generally" are also financial answers but are worded more specifically. The over-all impression is that for all women, and particularly those who prefer to have two, three, or four children, their main reason for not wanting more is financial. One might tentatively conclude that zero population growth may not be around the corner if prosperity is lurking around the same corner.

It is also interesting to note that concern about overpopulation is the top non-financial reason for holding family size down given by those who preferred two children. The fact that this reason is given more often by those who prefer the two-child family is consistent with the fact that advocates of zero population growth have emphasized the two-child family in particular. That is, if one were influenced by the mass media attention to overpopulation, two would be the most likely choice.[3]

The answers to this question, by the way, were at least as varied as the answers to the questions discussed previously. Almost all of the disadvantages were mentioned here and, in addition, the answers included many explanations as to why one number was preferred rather than another. For example, several respondents wanted an even number to avoid having a middle

[3] These results are consistent with a recent article by Judith Blake (1974) in which she also suggests that the decreased family size in America is a temporary reflection of economic conditions and the current (and probably temporary) concern with overpopulation.

TABLE 8

FIVE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR EACH FAMILY SIZE PREFERENCE
Per Cent of Fathers with Wives Under 40 Who Gave Response

Reasons[a]	One[b]		Two		Three[c]		Four		Five	
	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned
Financial matters generally	50.0	50.0	65.6	34.4	63.5	36.5	66.0	44.0	63.6	36.4
Cost of education							12.8	87.2	6.1	93.9
To be able to give to child					7.3	92.7				
Not enough space in house							8.5	91.5	12.1	87.9
Overpopulation	12.5	87.5	18.8	81.2	10.4	89.6				
Couldn't cope with more; not enough strength					6.3	93.7				
To avoid pregnancy	12.5	87.5								
Wife too old									12.1	87.9
Husband too old					6.3	93.7				
To give child enough attention					7.3	92.7	10.6	89.4		
Tie you down	12.5	87.5	5.6	94.4						
Take too much time			5.6	94.4						
That's a good number; enough for me			9.4	90.6			8.5	91.5	18.2	81.8
I have the right sex-ratio so no more									6.1	93.9
N		16		160		96		47		33

[a] Maximum of three responses per person.
[b] Only four reasons since no clear fifth most common.
[c] Six responses reported where two were tied for fifth.

child. These respondents were often choosing between two and four.

Table 8 gives the same data for the men. The general pattern is the same, but overpopulation is an even more common response for men than for women. Almost 19 per cent of the men preferring two children indicated the reason they did not want any more was concern with overpopulation.

We can also see in this table a fact that will be fully investigated in future analyses, that the sex of the children as they arrive affects family size desires. About 6 per cent of the fathers with five or more children were content to stand pat with their family size because they finally had the sex distribution they were looking for. When we asked respondents why they did not want less than a certain number, sex preference responses were still more frequent with 10.3 per cent of all mothers indicating that less would not provide the desired sex composition and a somewhat higher per cent, 10.6, of the men indicating this.

The findings I have reported here are not, of course, an adequate test of the theoretical model summarized earlier, nor an adequate answer to the questions raised about future population trends in the United States. While the full analysis will hold a more complete answer, the reader has at least had a chance to view the data at their freshest.

As a kind of tentative overview, I think the quality of the answers to the questions about advantages indicates that children have not lost their value in the United States. To the extent that some of this value is due to the absence of alternative roles and meaningful activity for women, however, the motivation for motherhood may be lessened by the new outlook on women's roles. A few women may choose careers over motherhood, but many women may be expected to choose a *return* to work, rather than having a third child.

On the other hand, the tables indicating that family size is often held in check by economic factors and concern with overpopulation make one wonder whether we are repeating the error of thirty years ago in extrapolating about population trends from a depression-based birth rate.

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REALITY AND RESEARCH IN THE ECOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

I SHALL SPEAK of reality and research in human development, and try to make some connection between the two. The last is no easy task, for much of the research in my field is carried out not in reality, but in artificial settings believed to be more conducive to scientific investigation. And even when we do conduct studies in the actual environments in which children live and grow, we focus far more attention on the developing organism than on its surround. In particular, we have little conception or knowledge of how environments change, and the implications of this change for the human beings who live and grow in these environments. In short, we know little about the *ecology of human development.*

Especially in recent years, the term "ecology" has been applied to a wide variety of phenomena. It does, however, have a core meaning that is especially appropriate for our concern and is reflected in its etymology. Ecology comes from the Greek root "oikos" meaning "home." With reference to human growth, an ecological perspective focuses attention on development as a function of interaction *between the developing organism and the enduring environments or contexts in which it lives out its life.*

The term "enduring" in the foregoing formulation has special significance. There is no implication, of course, that short-lived settings cannot be consequential for development. Indeed, the immediate situation can be critical. For the fish out of water, it is a matter of survival. The example brings out an important principle. Ecology implies a fit between the organism and its environment. If the organism is not only to survive but to develop, the fit must be even closer. Moreover, "development" connotes progressive structural and functional change *over time* in the relation between the organism and its environment. This, in turn, implies *continuity* both in the organism and its surround. In sum, development can take place only where the environment has some stability through time. Hence the emphasis, in our formulation, on contexts that are *enduring.* But even the most stable settings also change; that is, environments also undergo development, and thus may affect, and be affected by the organisms that inhabit them.

All this is somewhat abstract. I now propose to make it concrete by documenting the changes over time that have been taking place in one enduring context that is critical for human development—the family.

An analysis of these changes will focus attention on still other contexts that impinge upon and encompass the family and affect its capacity to function effectively in its child-rearing role.

Finally, from a consideration of this interplay of ecological systems, we shall derive perspectives for public policy and for research in human development that are somewhat different from those which prevail in our field today.

[1] I wish to express appreciation to the Foundation for Child Development for support in the development of the work presented in this paper and of the program of research grants in which the research recommendations are now being implemented. I am especially indebted to the following colleagues for their creative assistance in this endeavor: the members of the Foundation staff particularly Orville Brim, Heidi Sigal, Jane Dustan, and their predecessors Robert Slater and Barbara Jacquette; the devoted consultants to the FCD Program, Sarane Boocock, Michael Cole, Glen Elder, William Kessen, Melvin Kohn, Eleanor Maccoby, and Sheldon White; and my hard-working administrative aide and research assistants, Joyce Brainard, Susan Turner, Lynn Mandelbaum, and Carol Williams. I am also grateful to many colleagues and students whose suggestions and criticisms have been a major stimulus to my own thinking and some of whose ideas I have probably assimilated as my own; among them are the following: David Gosl a, Kurt Lüscher, Edward Devereux, Maureen Mahoney, James Garbarino, Eduardo Almeida, David Olds, Moncrieff Cochran, Julius Richmond, John Condry, John Hill, Harold Watts, Mary Keyserling, and David Knapp. Thanks are due as well to cooperative colleagues in the Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics, in particular Howard Hayghe, Robert Heuser, Arthur Norton, and Alexander Plateris.

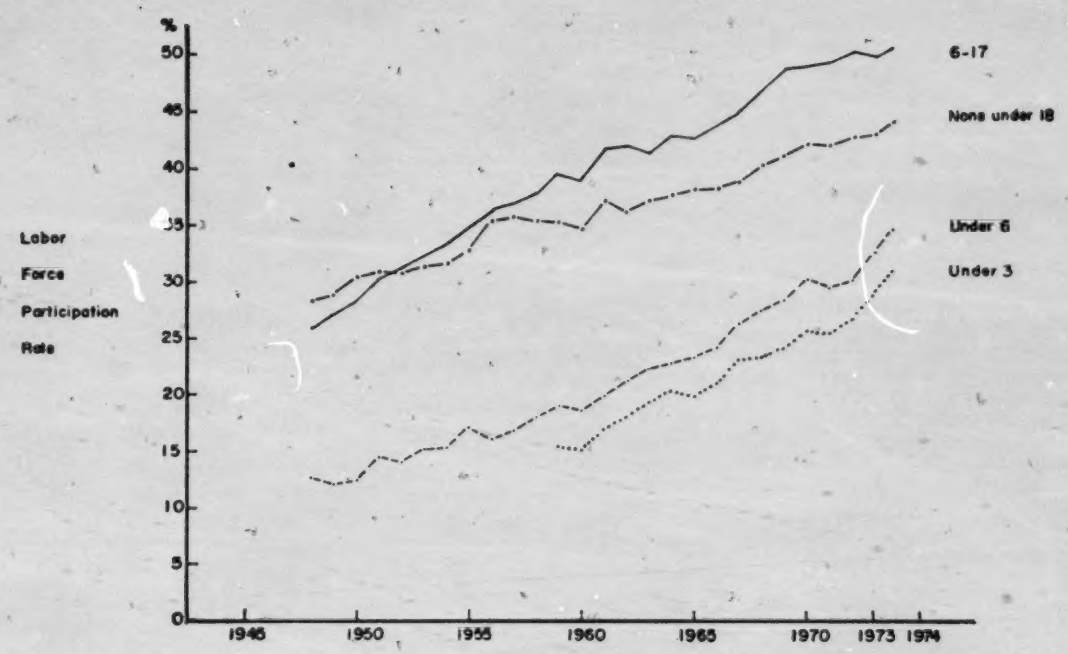

FIG. 1. Labor force participation rates for married women by presence and age of children. 1948–1973. Data through 1955 from *Current Population Reports* 1955, P-50, No. 62, table A; from 1956, *Special Labor Force Reports* 1969, No. 7, table 1 and 1974, No. 164, table 3.

II. THE CHANGING AMERICAN FAMILY

The American family has been undergoing rapid and radical change. Today, in 1975, it is significantly different from what it was only a quarter of a century ago. In documenting the evidence, I shall begin with aspects that are already familiar, and then proceed to other developments that are less well known. I will then show how these various trends combine and converge in an overall pattern that is far more consequential than any of its components.

Since my aim is to identify trends for American society as a whole, the primary sources of almost all the data I shall be presenting are government statistics, principally the *Current Population Reports* published by the Bureau of the Census, the *Special Labor Force Reports* issued by the Department of Labor, and the *Vital and Health Statistics Reports* prepared by the National Center of Health Statistics. These data are typically provided on an annual basis. What I have done is to collate and graph them in order to illuminate the secular trends.

1. *More Working Mothers*

Our first and most familiar trend is the increase in working mothers (fig. 1). There are several points to be made about these data.

1) Once their children are old enough to go to school, the majority of American mothers now enter the labor force. As of March, 1974, 51 per cent of married women with children from six to seventeen were engaged in or seeking work; in 1948 the rate was about half as high, 26 per cent.

2) Since the early fifties, mothers of school-age children have been more likely to work than married women without children.

3) The most recent and most rapid increase has been that of mothers of young children. One-third of all married women with children under six were in the labor force in 1974, three times as high as in 1948. Mothers of infants were not far behind; three out of ten married women with children under three were in the work force in 1974.

4) Whether their children were infants or teen-

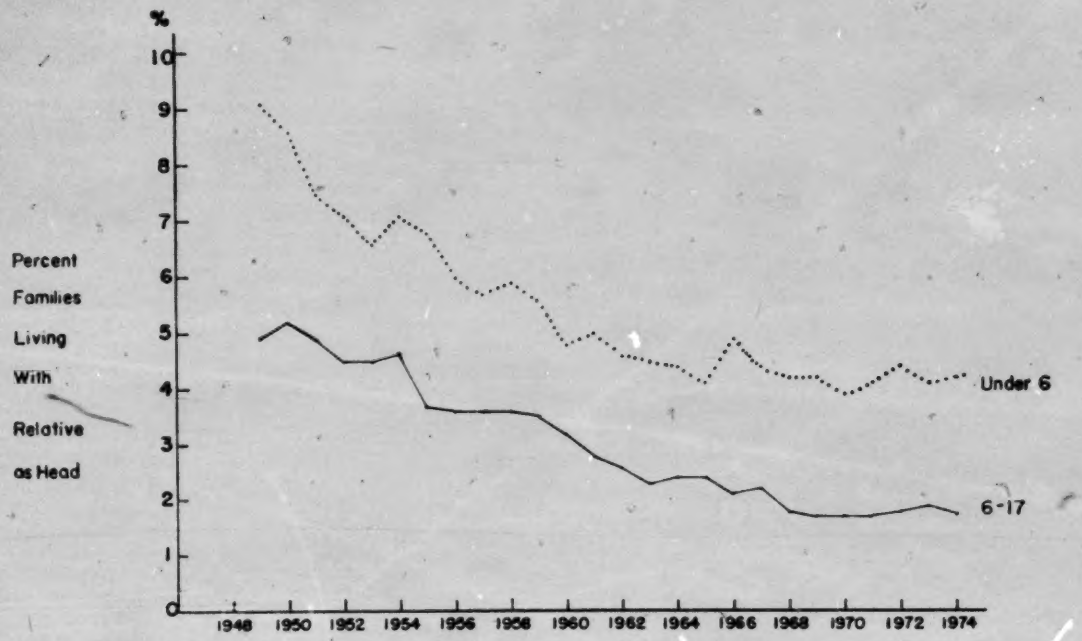

FIG. 2. Parent families living with a relative as family head as a percentage of all families with children under 6 and 6 through 17 years of age. 1948–1974.

agers, the great majority (two-thirds) of the mothers who had jobs were working full time.

5) These figures apply only to families in which the husband was present. As we shall see, for the rapidly growing numbers of single-parent families, the proportions in the labor force are much higher.

2. *Fewer Adults in the Home*

As more mothers have gone to work, the number of adults in the home who could care for the child has decreased. Whereas the number of children per family is now about the same today as it was twenty to thirty years ago, the number of adults in the household has dropped steadily to a 1974 average of two. This figure of course includes some households without children. Unfortunately, the Bureau of the Census does not publish a breakdown of the number of adults present in households containing children. A conservative approximation is obtainable, however, from the proportion of parents living with a relative as family head, usually a grandparent.[2]

As shown in figure 2, over the past quarter-century the percentage of such "extended" families has decreased appreciably. Although parents with children under six are more likely to be living with a relative than parents with older children (6–17), the decline over the years has been greatest for families with young children.

3. *More Single-Parent Families*

The adult relatives who have been disappearing from families include the parents themselves. As shown in figure 3, over a twenty-five-year period there has been a marked rise in the proportion of families with only one parent present, the

[2] This proportion represents a minimum estimate since it does not include adult relatives present besides parents, when the parent rather than the relative is the family head. For example, a family with a mother-in-law living in would not be counted unless she was regarded as the family head, paid the rent, etc. The percentage was calculated from two sets of figures reported annually in the *Current Population Reports* (Series P-20) of the U. S. Census; (*a*) the number of families (defined as two or more related persons, including children living together) and (*b*) the number of subfamilies (a married couple or single parent with one or more children living with a relative who is the head of the family). Since 1968, information has been provided as to whether or not the relative was a grandparent. This was the case in a little over 80 per cent of all instances.

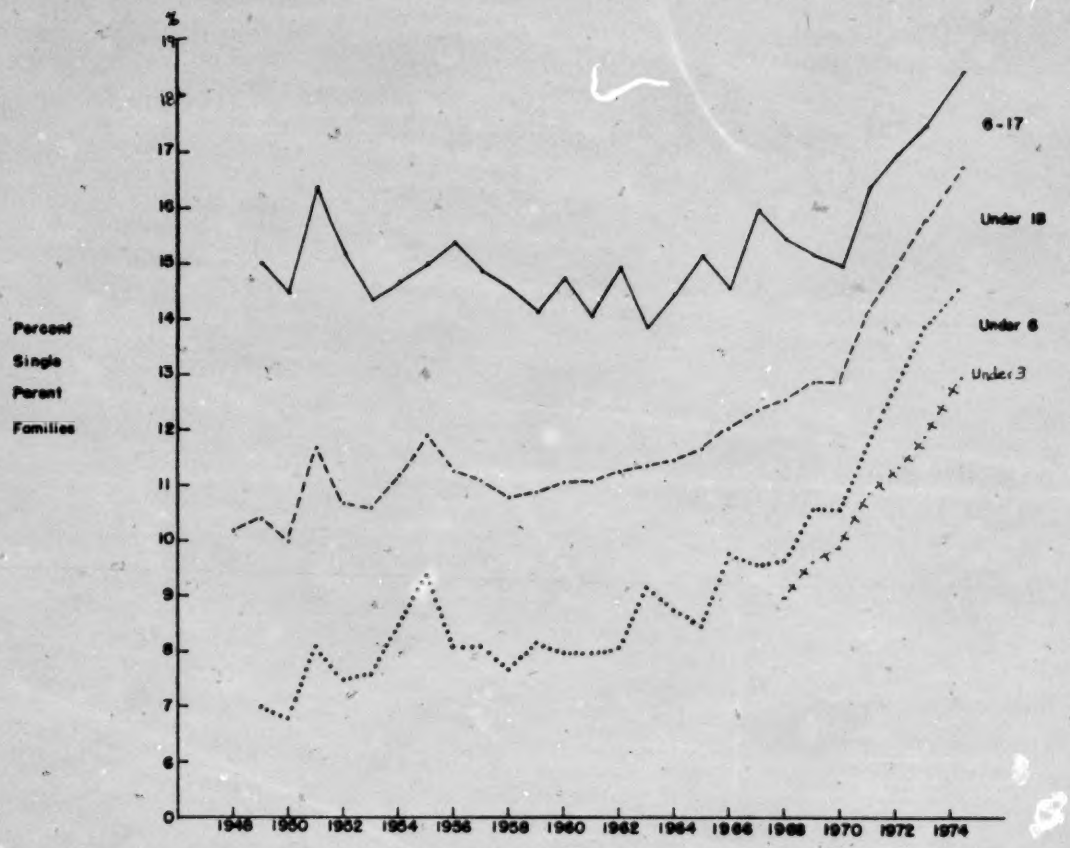

FIG. 3. Single parent families as a percentage of all families with children under 18, under 6, and 6 through 17 years of age. *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20. 1948–1973.

sharpest increase occurring during the past decade. According to the latest figures available, in 1974, *one out of every six children under eighteen years of age was living in a single-parent family.*[8] This rate is almost double that for a quarter of a century ago.

With respect to change over time, the increase has been most rapid among families with children under six years of age. This percentage has doubled from 7 per cent in 1948 to 15 per cent in 1974. The proportions are almost as high for very young children; in 1974 one out of every eight infants under three (13 per cent), was living in a single-parent family.

Further evidence of the progressive fragmentation of the American family appears when we apply our index of "extended families" to single-parent homes. The index shows a marked decline from 1948 to 1974, the sharpest drop occurring for families with preschoolers. Today, almost 90 per cent of all children with only one parent are living in independent families in which the single mother or father is also the family head.

The majority of such parents are also working, 67 per cent of mothers with school-age children, 54% of those with youngsters under six. And, across the board, over 80 per cent of those employed are working full time. Even among single-parent mothers with children under three, 45 per cent are in the labor force, of whom 86 per cent are working full time.

[8] This figure includes a small proportion of single-parent families headed by fathers. This figure has remained relatively constant, around 1 per cent since 1960.

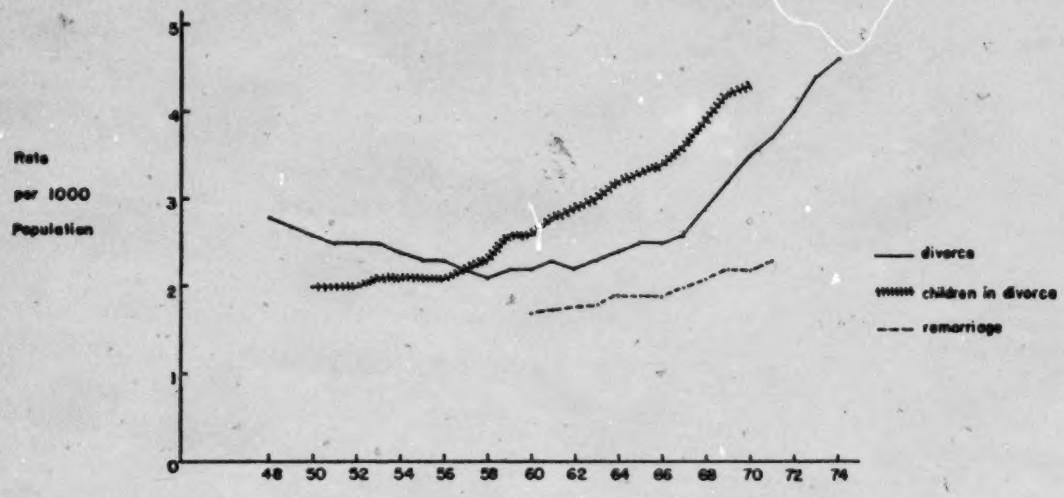

FIG. 4. Rates of divorce, number of children in divorce, and remarriage.

The comment is frequently made that such figures about one-parent families are misleading, since single parenthood is usually a transitional state soon terminated through remarriage. While this may be true for some selected populations, it does not appear to obtain for the nation as a whole. Figure 4 depicts the relevant data. The solid line in the middle shows the divorce rate for all marriages, the cross-hatched curve indexes divorces involving children, and the broken line describes the remarriage rate. To permit comparability, all three rates were computed with the total population for the given year as a base. It is clear that the remarriage rate, while rising, lags far behind the divorce rate, especially where children are involved.

Moreover, there is good reason to believe that the remarriage rate shown on the graph is substantially higher than that which applies for divorced, widowed, or other persons who are single parents. The overwhelming majority of single parents, about 95 per cent of them, are women. In 1971, the latest year for which the data are available, the female remarriage rate per 1000 divorced or widowed wives, was 37.3; the corresponding figure for men was 130.6, four times as high. Given this fact, it becomes obvious that the rate of remarriage for single-parent families involving children is considerably lower than the remarriage rate for both sexes, which is the statistic shown in the graph.

4. *More Children of Unwed Mothers*

After divorce, the most rapidly growing category of single-parenthood, especially since 1970, involves unmarried mothers. In the vital statistics of the United States, illegitimate births are indexed by two measures: the ***illegitimacy ratio***, computed as the ratio of illegitimate births per 1000 live babies born; and the ***illegitimacy rate***, which is the number of illegitimate births per 1000 unmarried women aged 15–44 years. As revealed in figure 5, the ratio has consistently been higher and risen far more rapidly than the rate. This pattern indicates not only that a growing proportion of unmarried women are having children, but that the percentage of single women among those of childbearing age is becoming ever larger. Consistent with this conclusion, recent United States census figures reveal an increasing trend for women to postpone the age of marriage. The rise in per cent single is particularly strong for the age group under twenty-five; and over 80 per cent of all illegitimate children are being born to women in this age bracket.

Such findings suggest that the trends we have been documenting for the nation as a whole may be occurring at a faster rate in some segments of American society, and more slowly, or perhaps not at all, in others. We turn next to an examination of this issue.

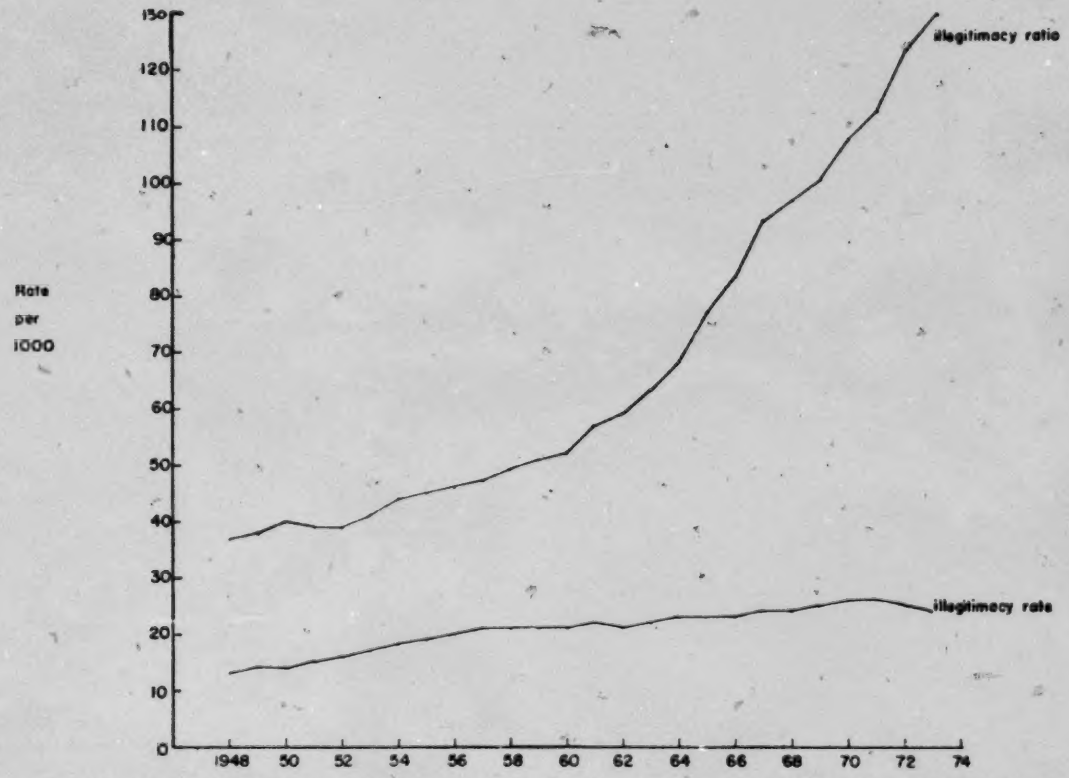

FIG. 5. Illegitimate births per 1000 live births (ratio) and per 1000 unmarried women (rate). 1948–1973.

III. WHICH FAMILIES ARE CHANGING?

Which Mothers Work? Upon analyzing available data for an answer to this question, we discover the following:

1. With age of child constant, it is the younger mother, particularly one under twenty-five years of age, who is most likely to enter the labor force. This trend has been increasing in recent years particularly for families with very young children (i.e., infants under three).

2. One reason why younger mothers are more likely to enter the labor force is to supplement the relatively low earnings of a husband just beginning his career. In general, it is in families in which the husbands have incomes below $5,000 (which is now close to the poverty line for a family of four) that the wives are most likely to be working. And for families in this bottom income bracket, almost half the mothers are under twenty-five. All of these mothers, including the youngest ones with the youngest children, are working because they have to.

3. But not all the mothers whose families need the added income are working. The limiting factor is the amount of schooling. It is only mothers with at least a high school education who are more likely to work when the husband has a low income. Since, below the poverty line, the overwhelming majority (68 per cent) of family heads have not completed high school, this means that the families who need it most are least able to obtain the added income that a working mother can contribute.

4. In terms of change over time, the most rapid increase in labor force participation has occurred for mothers in middle and high income families. To state the trend in somewhat provocative terms, mothers from middle income families are now entering the work force at a higher rate than married women from low income families did in the early 1960's.

But the highest labor force participation rates of all are to be found not among mothers from intact families, on whom we have concentrated so

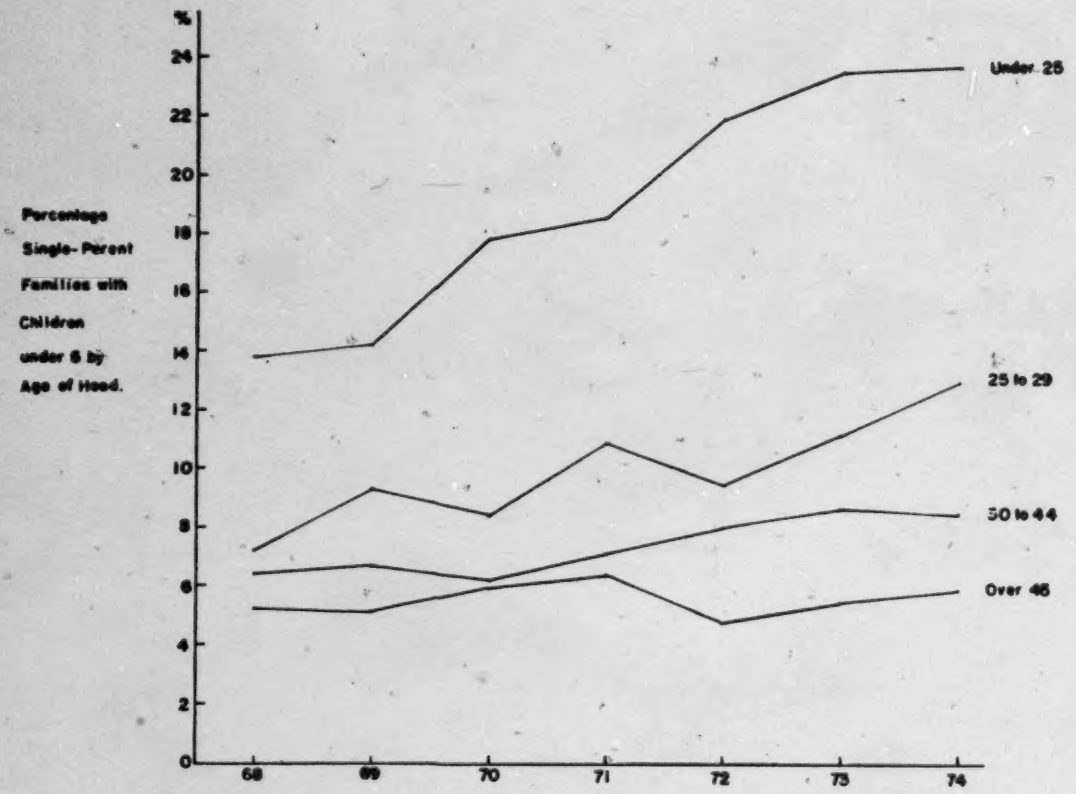

FIG. 6. Percentage of single parent family heads with children under 6 by age of head. 1968–1974.

far, but as we have already noted, among mothers who are single parents. Who are these single-parent families, and where are they most likely to be found?

Who and Where Are Single-Parent Families? As in the case of working mothers, single parenthood is most common and is growing most rapidly among the younger generation. Figure 6 shows the increase, over the past six years, in the proportion of one-parent families with children under six classified by age of the head of the family. By 1974, almost one out of four parents under twenty-five heading a family was without a spouse.

The association with income is even more marked. Figure 7 shows the rise, between 1968 and 1974, in female-headed families for seven successive income brackets ranging from under $4,000 per year to $15,000 or over. As we can see from the diagram, single-parent families are much more likely to occur and increase over time in the lower income brackets. Among families with incomes under $4,000, the overwhelming majority, 67 per cent, now contain only one parent. This figure represents a marked increase from 42 per cent only six years before. In sharp contrast, among families with incomes over $15,000, the proportion has remained consistently below 2 per cent. Further analysis reveals that single-parenthood is especially common among young families in the low income brackets. For example, among family heads under twenty-five with earnings under $4,000, the proportion of single parents was 71 per cent for those with all children under six, and 86 per cent with all children of school age. The more rapid increases over the past few years, however, tended to occur among older low income families, who are beginning to catch up. It would appear that the disruptive processes first struck the younger families among the poor, and are now affecting the older generation as well.

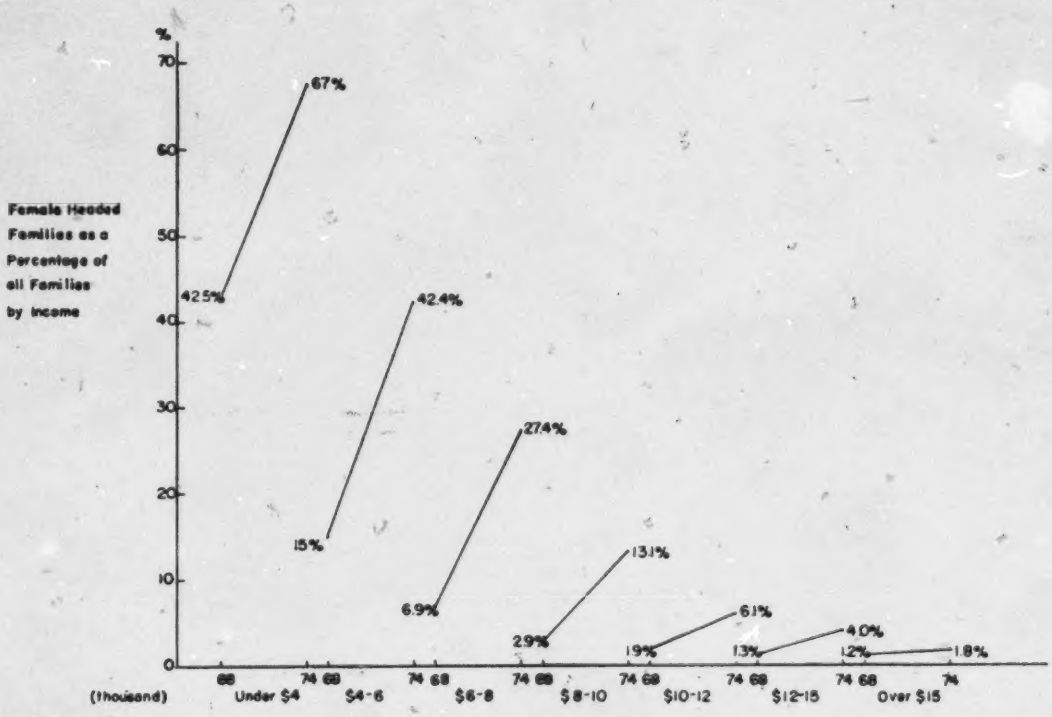

FIG. 7. Female-headed families as a percentage of all family heads under 65 with children under 18 by income in previous year. 1968–1974.

But a word of caution is in order. It is important to recognize what might be called a pseudo-artifact, pseudo because there is nothing spurious in what appears in the diagram, but the pattern is susceptible to more than one possible interpretation. For example, though the percentage for the highest income group is very low, it would be a mistake to conclude that a well-to-do intact family is at low risk of disruption, for there is more than one explanation for the falling fencepost we see in the figure. The interpretation that most readily comes to mind is that families with children are more likely to split up when they are under financial strain. But the causal chain could also run the other way. The break-up of the family could result in a lower income for the new, single-parent head, who, in the overwhelming majority of cases, is, of course, the mother.

Evidence on this issue is provided by the average income for separated and non-separated family heads. For example, in 1973 the median income for all families headed by a male with wife present and at least one child under six was $12,000. The corresponding figure for a single-parent female-headed family was $3,600, less than 30 per cent of the income for an intact family, and far below the poverty line. It is important to bear in mind that these are nationwide statistics.

The nature and extent of this inequity is further underscored when we take note that the average income for the small proportion of father-headed single-parent families with preschool children was $9,500. In other words, it is only the *single-parent mother* who finds herself in severely strained financial circumstances. Economic deprivation is even more extreme for single-parent mothers under the age of twenty-five. Such a mother, when all her children are small (i.e., under six), must make do with a median income of only $2,800. Yet there are more than a million and a half mothers in this age group, and they constitute one-third of all female-headed families with children under six.

We can now understand why the frequency and rate of increase of single parentage is so low among families in the highest income brackets. There are simply few single parents who have

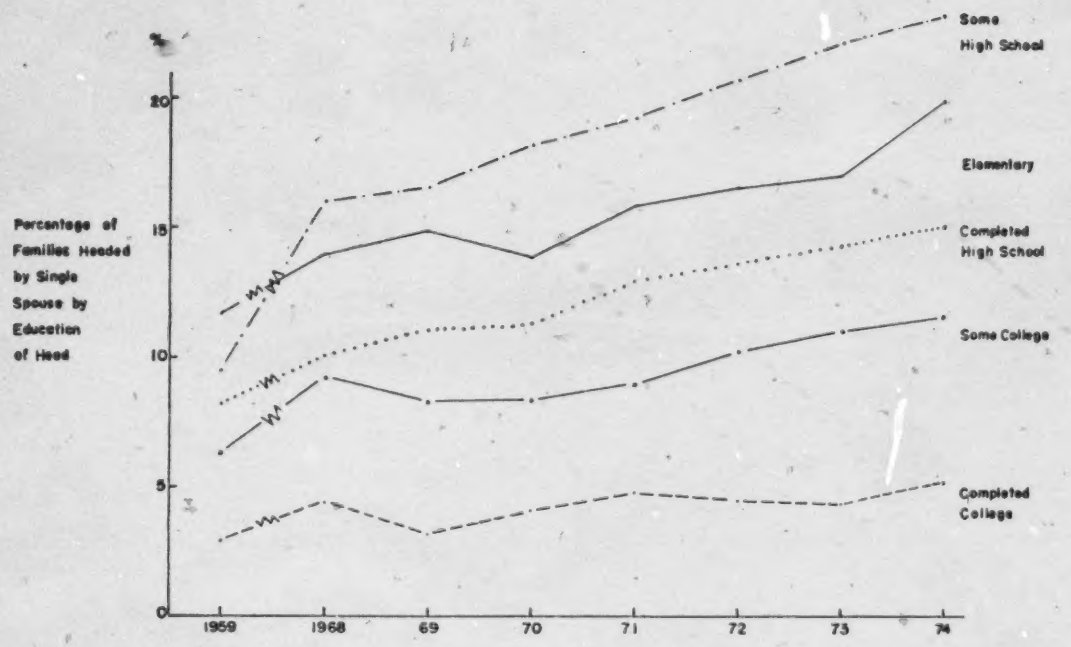

FIG. 8. Families headed by a single spouse as a percentage of all family heads with children under eighteen. 1959–1974.

incomes as high as $10,000. Once separation occurs, family income drops substantially transferring the family into lower income brackets in the left-hand portion of figure 7.

Does this mean that the low income is primarily a consequence rather than a cause of single-parent status? To answer this question directly we would need to know the income of the family before the split. Unfortunately this information was not obtained in the census interview. We do have a datum, however, that is highly correlated with the family's socio-economic status and generally precedes the event of separation; namely, the mother's level of schooling. Is it the well-educated or poorly educated woman who is most likely to become a single parent?

The answer to this question appears in figure 8. In general, the less schooling she has experienced, the more likely is the mother to be left without a husband. There is only one exception to the general trend. The proportion tends to be highest, and has risen most rapidly, not for mothers receiving only an elementary education, but for those who attended high school but failed to graduate. It seems likely that many of these are unwed mothers who left school because of this circumstance. Consistent with this interpretation, further analysis reveals that the foregoing pattern occurs only for women in the younger age groups, and is most marked for mothers of children from zero-to-three years of age. In 1974, among mothers of infants in this age group, 14 per cent, or one out of every seven, was a high school dropout.

This diagram is misleading in one respect. It leaves the impression that there has been little increase recently in the per cent of single-parent families among college graduates. A somewhat different picture emerges, however, when the data are broken down simultaneously by age of mother and child. When this is done, it becomes apparent that college graduates are more likely to defer family break-up until children are older. Once they can be entered into school, or even preschool, the rates of parental separation go up from year to year, especially among the younger generation of college-educated parents.

In the case of split families, we are in a position to examine not only who is likely to become an only parent, but also where, in terms of place of residence. Figure 9 shows the rise over the last six years in the percentage of single-parent

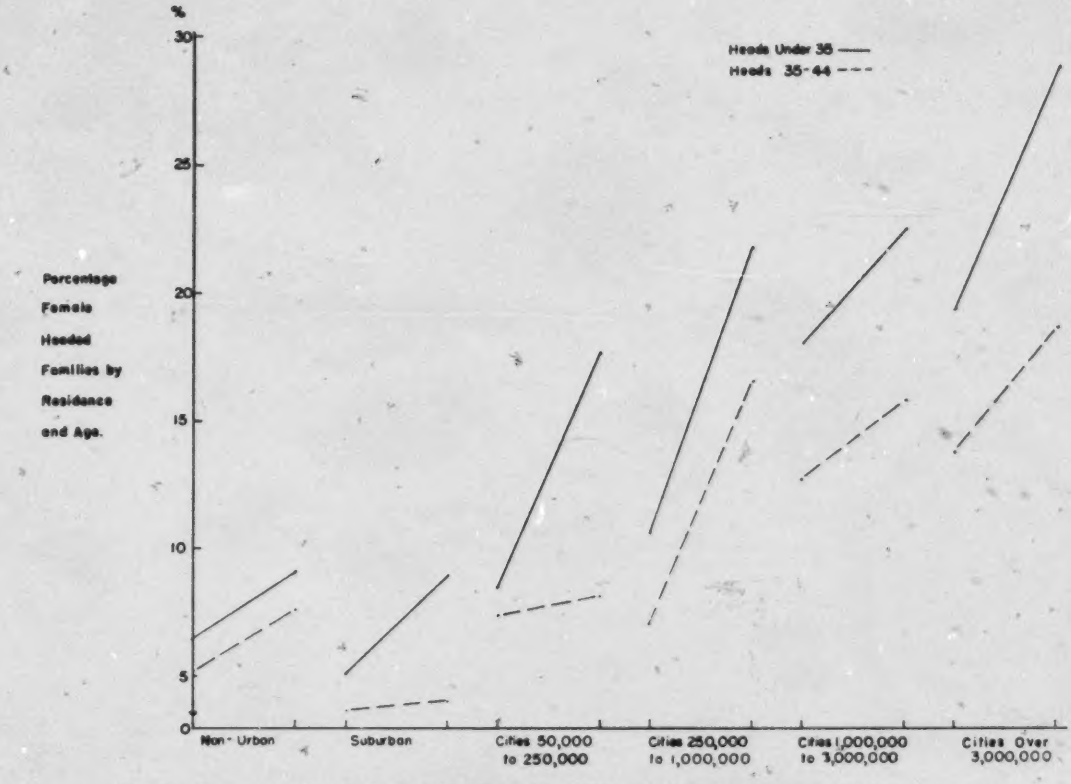

FIG. 9. Percentage female-headed families with children under 6, by place of residence and age of family head. 1968–1974.

families with children under six living in non-urban and suburban areas, and in American cities ranging in size from 50,000 to over 3,000,000. The graph illustrates at least three important trends. First, the percentage of single-parent families increases markedly with city size, reaching a maximum in American metropolises with a population of over 3 million. Second, the growing tendency for younger families to break up more frequently than older ones is greatest in the large urban centers and lowest in non-urban and suburban areas. Thus the proportion of single parents reaches its maximum among families with heads under thirty-five and living in cities with more than 3,000,000 persons. Here one out of three to four households has a single parent as the head. Finally, the most rapid change over time is occurring not in the larger cities but those of medium size. This pattern suggests that the high levels of family fragmentation which, six years ago, were found only in major metropolitan centers, are now occurring in smaller urban areas as well.

The Ecology of a Race Difference. The question may well arise why, with all the breakdowns we have made—by age, income, education, and place of residence—we have not presented any data separately by race. We have deferred this separation for a reason which will become apparent in this next chart (fig. 10). It shows the rise, between 1960 and 1970, in the percentage of single-parent families by income of head within three types of residence areas: urban, suburban, and non-urban, separately for black and white families. Unfortunately, no breakdown was available within the urban category by city size so that, as a result, the effects of this variable are considerably attenuated. Nevertheless, it is clear that both income and place of residence make an independent contribution to the level and size of broken families.

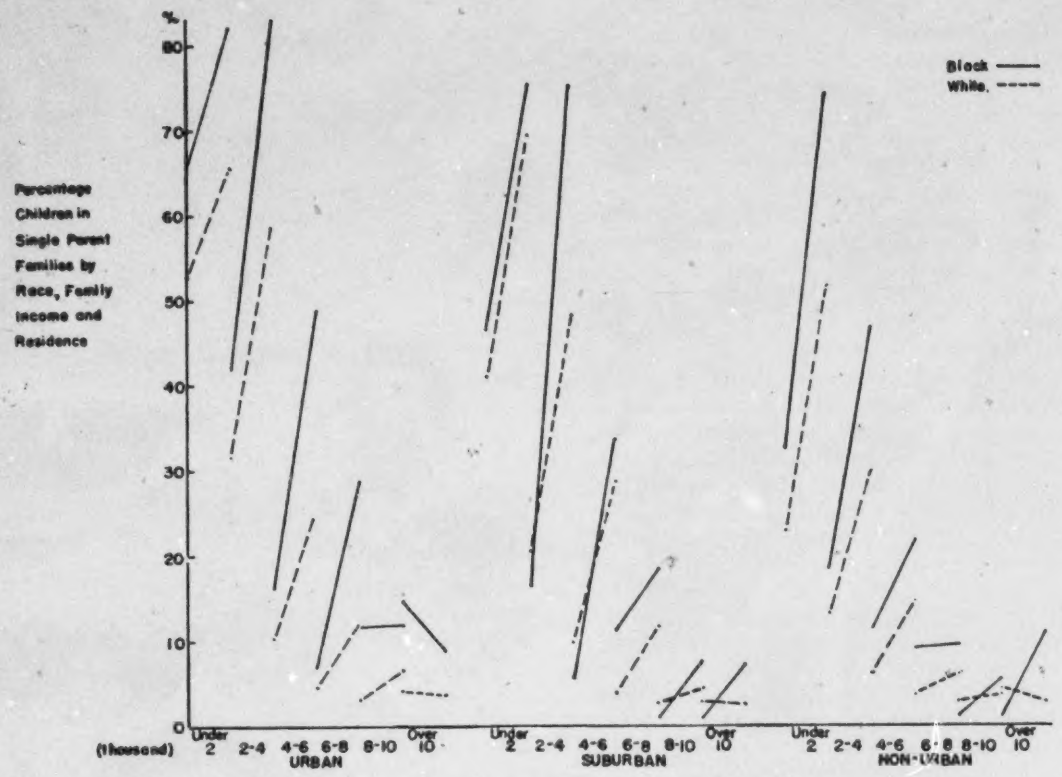

FIG. 10. Percentage of children in single-parent families by race, family income in previous year, and residence. Each line segment shows change from 1960 to 1970.

Turning to the issue of race, note that in the graph, the rising lines for blacks and whites are almost parallel. In other words, within each setting and income level, the percentage of single parents is increasing about as fast for whites as it is for blacks. To put it in more general terms, *families that live in similar circumstances, whatever their color, are affected in much the same ways.* To be sure, at the end of the decade, the blacks within each setting and income bracket experience a higher percentage of single-parent families than do the whites. But they entered the decade in the same relative positions. This suggests that some different experiences prior to 1960 must have contributed to the disparity we now observe between black and white families living in similar conditions. One does not have to seek long in the historical records, especially those written by blacks, to discover what some of these experiences may have been.

But, of course, in reality the overwhelming majority of blacks and whites do not live in similar circumstances. It is only in our artificially selected comparison groups, especially in the context which is most homogeneous, namely suburbia, that data for the two races begin to look alike. Without statistical control for income and urbanization, the curves for the two races are rather different; they are much farther apart, and the curve for blacks rises at a substantially faster rate. Specifically, between 1960 and 1970, the percentage of single-parent families among blacks increased at a rate five times that for whites, and at the end of that period the percentage was over four times as high, 35 per cent versus 8 per cent. In the last four years, both figures have risen and the gap has widened. In 1974, the percentage of single-parent families with children under 18 was 13 per cent for whites and 44 per cent for blacks.

This dramatic disparity becomes more comprehensible, however, when we apply what we have learned about the relation of urbanization and income to family disruption. Upon inquiry, we discover that in 1974 about 6 per cent of all white families with children under eighteen were living in cities with a population of 3 million or more, compared to 21 per cent for blacks, over three and one-half times as high; this ratio has been rising steadily in recent years.

Turning to family income, in 1973, the latest year for which the data are available, the median income for an intact family with children under six was $12,300 when the family was white, $6,700 when it was black. Ironically, single-parenthood reduced the race difference by forcing both averages down below the poverty level—$3,700 for whites, $3,400 for blacks. Consistent with these facts, the percentage of black families who fall below the poverty line is much higher than that for whites. In 1973, 33 per cent, or one-third, of all black families with children under eighteen, were classified in the low income bracket, compared to 8 per cent for whites, a ratio of over four to one. Moreover, the advantage of whites over blacks in family income, which decreased during the 1960's, reversed itself at the turn of the decade and has been increasing since 1969. In the language of the latest census report:

> The 1973 median income for black families was 58 percent of the white median income and this continued a downward trend in this ratio from 61 percent, which occurred in both 1960 and 1970. In contrast to the 1970's, the ratio of black to white median family income had increased during the 1960's.[3a]

We can now understand why non-white mothers have gone to work in increasing numbers and at rates substantially higher than their white counterparts. In 1974, almost one-third of white married women with husbands present and children under six were in the labor force; the corresponding fraction for non-white families was over half (52 per cent). Fifteen years ago, the gap between the racial groups was much smaller, 18 per cent versus 28 per cent, and it is of course the non-whites who have increased at the faster rate.

But the more vulnerable position of black families in American society becomes clearest when we examine the comparative exposure of both ethnic groups to the combined effects of low income and urbanization. Unfortunately, once again the data are not broken down by city size, but we can compare the distribution of black and white families with children under eighteen living in so-called "poverty areas" in urban, suburban, and rural settings, further sub-classified by family income. A poverty area is a census tract in which 20 per cent or more of the population was below the low income level in 1969. As might be expected, more white families with children (44 per cent of them) reside in suburbia than in central cities or rural areas, and the overwhelming majority (70 per cent) live outside of poverty areas and have incomes above the poverty line. In contrast, the corresponding percentages for black families are much smaller, 17 per cent and 32 per cent respectively; well over half of black families (58 per cent) are concentrated in central cities, more than half of these live in poverty areas within those cities, and half of these, in turn, have incomes below the poverty line. Seventeen per cent, or one out of every six black families with children under eighteen, are found in the most vulnerable ecological niche (low income in a poverty area of a central city), compared to less than 1 per cent of all whites. Even though only 14 per cent of all American families with children are black, among those living in poverty areas of central cities and having incomes below the poverty level, they constitute the large majority (66 per cent).

The grossly differential distribution of blacks and whites in American society by income, place of residence, and other ecological dimensions which we have not been able to examine for lack of adequate data, makes even more comprehensible the difference in degree of family disruption experienced by these two major classes of American citizens. Indeed, given the extent of the disparity in conditions of life, one wonders what keeps the figures for black families from running even higher than they do.

A possible answer is suggested by the data provided in figure 11, which shows our measure of "extended families" separately for white and non-white families. It will be observed that this index is consistently and markedly higher for non-whites. In other words, non-whites are much more likely to be living in a household that

[3a] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 97: p. 5: "Money Income in 1973 of Families and Persons in the United States," U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 1975.

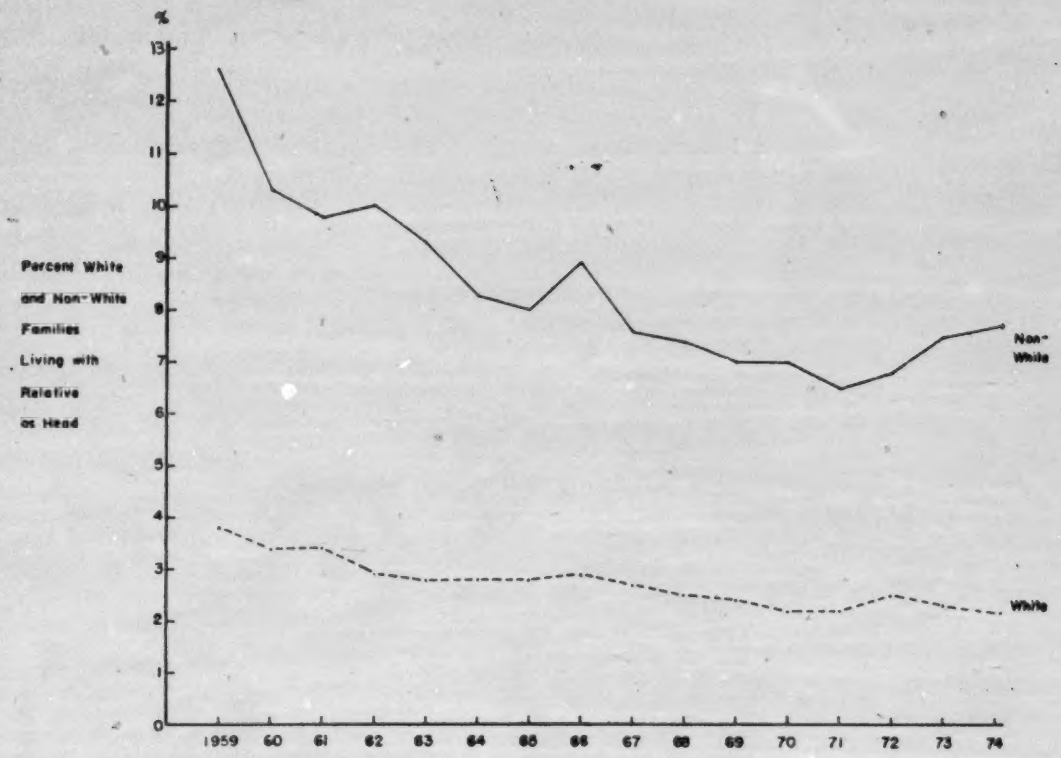

FIG. 11. Percentage of white and non-white families with children under 18 living with a relative as family head. The base for the percentage is the total number of families for each race with children under 18. 1959–1974.

includes more than two generations, with another relative besides the child's parent acting as the family head. To be sure, the decline since 1959 has been greater for non-whites than for whites, but the former curve has shown an upswing in the last four years.

But there are other less favorable developments as well. If we examine, separately by race, the extent to which single parents head their own families, we observe the same trend toward greater isolation for both whites and non-whites. As we see in figure 12, these two curves are almost indistinguishable. Again, regardless of color, families in similar circumstances are affected in the same way for better or for worse.

What this means is that the disparity in the fate of white and black families in American society is a reflection of the way in which our society now functions and, hence, is subject to change if and when we decide to alter our policies and practices.

We have now completed our analysis of changes in the American family over the past quarter-century. For the nation as a whole, the analysis reveals progressive fragmentation and isolation of the family in its child-rearing role. With respect to different segments of American society, the changes have been most rapid among younger families with younger children, and increase with the degree of economic deprivation and urbanization, reaching their maximum among low income families living in the central core of our largest cities. But the general trend applies to all strata of the society. Middle class families, in cities, suburbia, and non-urban areas, are changing in similar ways. Specifically, in terms of such characteristics as the proportion of working mothers, number of adults in the home, single-parent families, or children born out of wedlock, the middle class family of today increasingly resembles the low income family of the early 1960's.

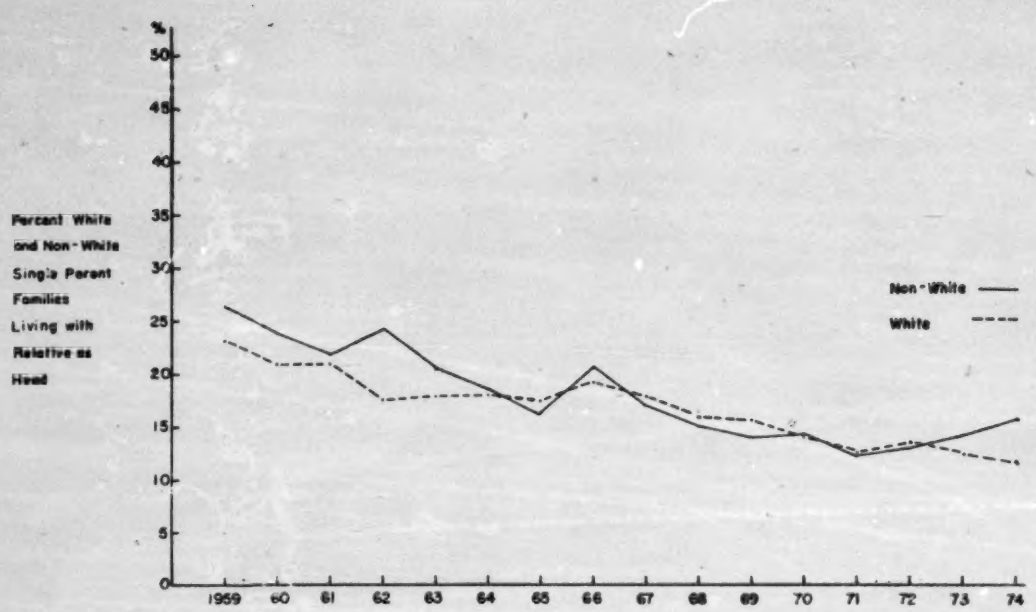

FIG. 12. Percentage of white and non-white single-parent families with children under 18 living with a relative as family head. 1959–1974. The base for the percentage is the total number of single-parent families for each race with children under 18.

IV. THE CHANGING AMERICAN CHILD

Having described the changes in the structure and status of the American family, we are now ready to address our next question: So what? Or, to be more formal and explicit, what do these changes mean for the well-being and growth of children? What does it mean for the young that more and more mothers, especially mothers of preschoolers and infants, are going to work, the majority of them full time? What does it mean that, as these mothers leave for work, there are also fewer adults in the family who might look after the child, and that, among adults who are leaving the home, the principal deserter is one or the other parent, usually the father?

Paradoxically, the most telling answer to the foregoing questions is yet another question which is even more difficult to answer: *Who cares for America's children? Who cares?*

At the present, substitute care for children of whatever form—nursery schools, group day care, family day care, or just a body to babysit—falls so far short of the need that it can be measured in millions of children under the age of six, not to mention the millions more of school-age youngsters, so-called "latch-key" children, who come home to empty houses, and who contribute far out of proportion to the ranks of pupils with academic and behavior problems, have difficulties in learning to read, who are dropouts, drug users, and juvenile delinquents.

But we are getting ahead of our story. We have seen what has been happening to America's families. Let us try to examine systematically what has been happening to the American child. Unfortunately, statistics at a national level on the state of the child are neither as comprehensive nor as complete as those on the state of the family, but the available data do suggest a pattern consistent with the evidence from our prior analysis.

We begin at the level at which all the trends of disorganization converge. For this purpose, there is an even better index than low income level—one that combines economic deprivation with every kind—health, housing, education, and welfare. Let us look first at children who are born to American citizens whose skin color is other than white.

1. *Death in the First year of Life*

The first consequence we meet is that of survival itself.

In recent years, many persons have become aware of the existence of the problem to which I refer, but perhaps not of the evidence for its practical solution. America, the richest and most powerful country in the world, stands fourteenth among the nations in combating infant mortality. Moreover, our ranking has dropped steadily in recent decades. A similar situation obtains with respect to maternal and child health, day care, children's allowances, and other basic services to children and families.

But the figures for the nation as a whole, dismaying as they are, mask even greater inequities. For example, infant mortality for non-whites in the United States is almost twice that for whites, the maternal death rate is four times as high, and there are a number of southern states, and northern metropolitan areas, in which the ratios are considerably higher. Among New York City health districts, for example, the infant mortality rate in 1966–1967 varied from 13 per 1,000 in Haspeth, Forest Hills, to 41.5 per 1,000 in central Harlem.[4] One illuminating way of describing the differences in infant mortality by race is from a time perspective. Babies born of non-white mothers are today dying at a rate which white babies have not experienced for almost a quarter of a century. The current non-white rate of 28.1 was last reported for American whites in the late 1940's. The rate for whites in 1950, 26.8 per cent, was not yet achieved by non-whites in 1974. In fact in recent years the gap between the races, instead of narrowing, has been getting wider.

The way to the solution is suggested by the results of the two-stage analysis carried out by Dr. Harold Watts for the Advisory Committee on Child Development of the National Academy of Sciences. First, Watts demonstrated that 92 per cent of the variation in infant death among the 30 New York City health districts is explainable by low birth weight. Second, he showed that 97 per cent of the variation in low birth weight can be attributed to the fraction of mothers who received no prenatal care or received care only late in their pregnancy, and the fraction unwed at the time of delivery.

Confirmatory evidence is available from an important and elegant study, published in 1973, on the relations between infant mortality, social and medical risk, and health care.[5] From an analysis of data in 140,000 births in New York City, the investigators found the following:

1. The highest rate of infant mortality was for children of black native-born women at social and medical risk and with inadequate health care. This rate was 45 times higher than that for a group of white mothers at no risk with adequate care. Next in line were Puerto Rican infants with a rate 22 times as high.

2. Among mothers receiving adequate medical care, there was essentially no difference in mortality among white, black, and Puerto Rican groups, even for mothers at high medical risk.

3. For mothers at socio-economic risk, however, adequate medical care substantially reduced infant mortality rates for all races, but the figures for black and Puerto Rican families were still substantially greater than those for whites. In other words, other factors besides inadequate medical care contribute to producing the higher infant mortality for these non-white groups. Again these factors have to do with the social and economic conditions in which these families have to live. Thus, the results of the New York City study and other investigations point to the following characteristics as predictive of higher infant mortality: employment status of the breadwinner, mother unwed at infant's birth, married but no father in the home, number of children per room, mother under twenty or over thirty-five, and parents' educational level.

4. Approximately 95 per cent of those mothers at risk had medical or social conditions that could have been identified at the time of the first prenatal visit; infants born to this group of women accounted for 70 per cent of the deaths.

What would have happened had these conditions been identified and adequate medical care provided? The answer to this question has recently become available from an analysis of data from the Maternal and Infant Care Projects of HEW which, in the middle 1960's, were established in slum areas of fourteen cities across the nation and in Puerto Rico. In Denver, a dramatic fall in infant mortality from 34.2 per 1,000 live births in 1964 to 21.5 per 1,000 in 1969 was observed for the 25 census tracts that made up the target area for such a program. In Birmingham, Alabama, the rate decreased from 25.4 in 1965 to 14.3 in 1969, and in Omaha from 33.4 in 1964

[4] D. S. Kessner, *et al., Infant Death: An Analysis by Maternal Risk and Health Care* (Washington, D. C., Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, 1973).

[5] Kessner, *et al., op. cit.*

to 13.4 in 1969. Significant reductions have also occurred in the populations served by these programs in prematurity, repeated teenage pregnancy, women who conceive over thirty-five years old, and families with more than four children.

It is a reflection of our distorted priorities that these programs are currently in jeopardy, even though their proposed replacement through revenue sharing is not yet on the horizon. The phasing out of these projects will result in a return of mortality to earlier levels; more infants will die.

2. *The Interplay of Biological and Environmental Factors*

The decisive role that environmental factors can play in influencing the biological growth of the organism, and, thereby, its psychological development, is illustrated by a series of recent follow-up studies of babies experiencing prenatal complications at birth, but surviving and growing up in families at different socio-economic levels. As an example we may take an excellently designed and analyzed study by Richardson.[6] It is a well established finding that mothers from low income families bear a higher proportion of premature babies, as measured either by weight at birth or gestational age, and that prematures generally tend to be somewhat retarded in mental growth. Richardson studied a group of such children in Aberdeen, Scotland, from birth through seven years with special focus on intellectual development. He found, as expected, that children born prematurely to mothers in low income families showed significantly poorer performance on measures of mental growth, especially when the babies were both born before term and weighed less than five pounds. The average I.Q. for these children at seven years of age was 80. But the higher the family's socio-economic level, the weaker the tendency for birth weight to be associated with impaired intellectual function. For example, in the higher social class group, infants born before term and weighing under five pounds had a mean I.Q. of 105, higher than the average for the general population, and only five points below the mean for full term babies of normal weight born to mothers in the same socio-economic group. In other words, children starting off with similar biological deficits ended up with widely differing risks of mental retardation as a function of the conditions of life for the family in which they were born.

But low income does not require a biological base to affect profoundly the welfare and development of the child. To cite but two examples: child abuse is far more common in poor than in middle income families,[7] and the socio-economic status of the family has emerged as the most powerful predictor of school success in studies conducted at both the national and state level.[8]

Nor does income tell the whole story. In the first place, other social conditions, such as the absence of the parent, have been shown to exacerbate the impact of poverty. For example, in low income homes, child abuse is more likely to occur in single-parent than in intact families, especially when the mother is under twenty-five years of age.[9] It is also the young mother who is most likely to have a premature baby.

In terms of subsequent development, a statewide study in New York of factors affecting school performance at all grade levels[10] found that 58 per cent of the variation in student achievement could be predicted by three factors: broken homes, overcrowded housing, and the educational level of the head of the household; when racial and ethnic variables were introduced into the analysis, they accounted for less than an additional 2 per cent of the variation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, low income may not be the critical factor affecting the development and needs of children and families. The most powerful evidence for this conclusion comes from census data on trends in family income over the past quarter-century. Even after adjustment for inflation, the level has been rising steadily at least through 1974, and for black families as well as white. A reflection of this fact is a drop over the years in the percentages of children in families below the poverty line, 27

[6] S. A. Richardson, "Ecology of Malnutrition: Nonnutritional Factors Influencing Intellectual and Behavioral Development." In: *Nutrition, the Nervous System, and Behavior* (Scientific Publication #251, Pan American Health Organization, Washington, D. C., 1972), pp. 101–110.

[7] D. G. Gil, *Violence against Children: Physical Child Abuse in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970).

[8] J. S. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D. S., U. S. Office of Education, 1966); C. Jencks, *Inequality* (New York, Basic Books, 1972); *Report of the New York State Commission on the Quality, Cost, and Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education* 1.

[9] Gil, *ibid.*

[10] *Report of the New York State Commission, ibid.*

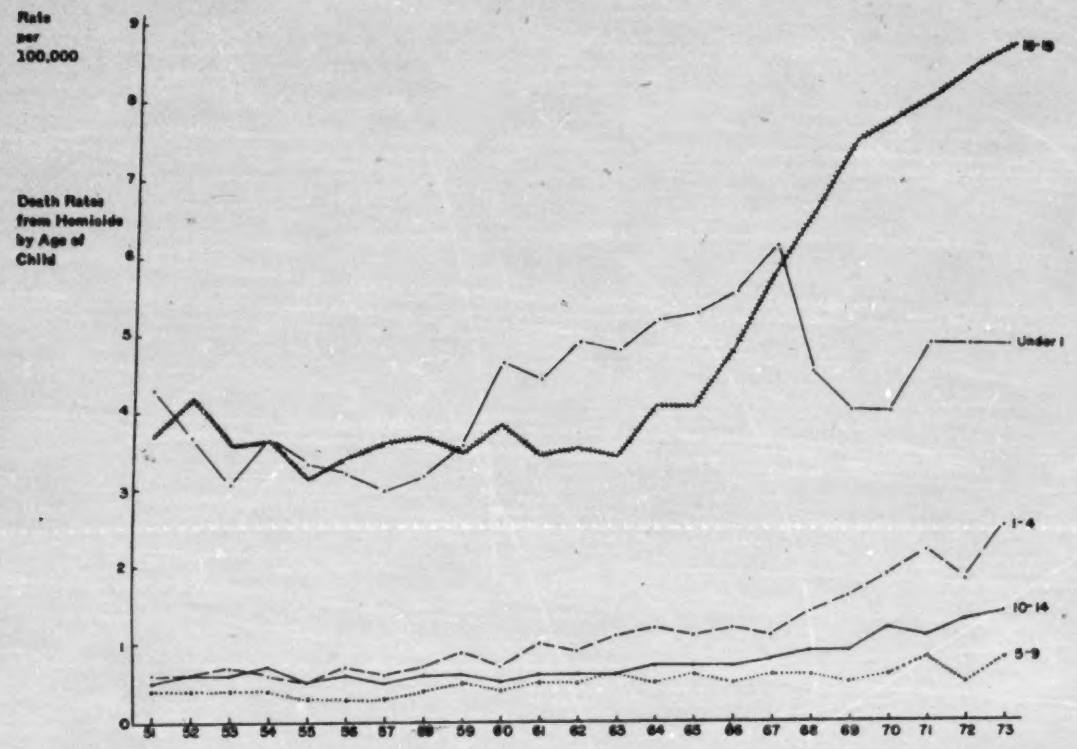

FIG. 13. Death rates from homicide by age of child victim. 1951–1973.

per cent in 1959, 15 per cent in 1968, and 14 per cent in 1973.[11]

3. *Changes over Time*

And yet, as we have seen, the percentage of single-parent families has been growing, especially in recent years. And there are analogous trends for indices bearing on the state and development of the child. Although lack of comparability between samples and measures precludes a valid assessment of change in child abuse rates, an index is available for this phenomenon in its most extreme form; homicide, or the deliberate killing of a child. As shown in figure 13, the rate has been increasing over time for children of all ages. Adolescents are more likely to be the victims of homicide than younger children except in the first year of life, in which the rates again jump upward.

[11] Unfortunately, the curve leveled off in 1969 and has shown no decline in the 1970's.

Children who survive face other risks. For example, the New York study cited earlier[12] reports a secular trend in the proportion of children failing to perform at minimal levels in reading and arithmetic: each year "more and more children are below minimum competence."

One might conclude that such a decrease in competence is occurring primarily, if not exclusively, among families of lower socio-economic status, with limited income, education, and cultural background. The data of figure 14 suggest that the trend may be far more democratic. The graph shows the average score achieved each year in the verbal and mathematical sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, taken by virtually all high school juniors and seniors who plan to go to college. The test scores are used widely as the basis for determining admission. As is apparent from the figure, there has been a steady and substantial decrease over the past decade—35 points in the verbal section, 24 in the mathe-

[12] New York State Commission, *op. cit.*

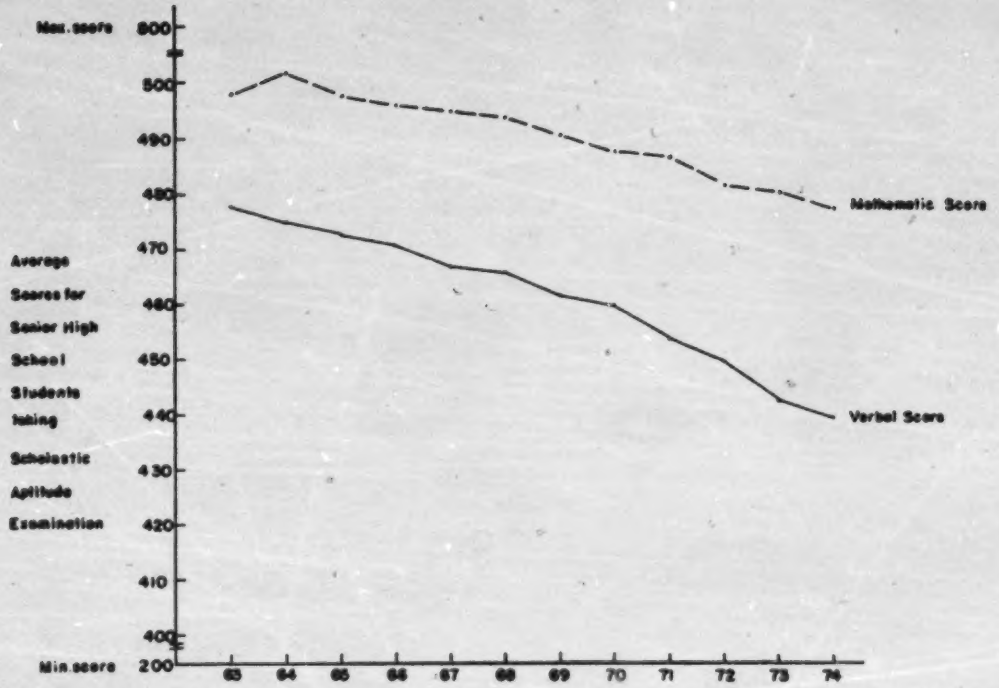

FIG. 14. Average scores for senior high school students taking the scholastic aptitude examinations. 1963–1974. Data provided courtesy of Education Testing Service.

matical section. In interpreting the significance of this decline, Dr. T. Anne Clarey, chief of the Program Services Division of the College Board, warned that it is incorrect to conclude from a score decline that schools have not been preparing students in verbal and mathematical skills as well as they have in former years. "The SAT measures skills developed over a youngster's life time—both in and out of the school setting. . . . It is evident that many factors, including family and home life, exposure to mass media, and other cultural and environmental factors are associated with students' performance." [13]

Finally, the remaining sets of data shift attention from the cognitive to the emotional and social areas. Figures 15 and 16 document the increase in suicide rates in recent years for children as young as ten. Figure 17 shows an even more precipitous climb in the rate of juvenile delinquency. Since 1963, crimes by children have been increasing at a higher rate than the juvenile population. In 1973, among children under fifteen,[14] almost half (47 per cent) of all arrests involved theft, breaking and entry, and vanda-

[13] Press release, College Entrance Examination Board, New York, New York, December 20, 1973. A recent report in *Time* (March 31, 1975) quotes Sam McCandless, director of admissions testing for the College Entrance Examination Board, as refuting arguments that the decrease in SAT scores is not "real" but a reflection of changes on the tests or in the social composition of students taking them. According to McCandless, the reason for the drop is a decline in students' "developed reasoning ability."

The same article reports two other developments which corroborate the downward trend in learning:

"The National Assessment of Educational Progress—a federally funded testing organization—reported last week that students knew less about science in 1973 than they did three years earlier. The test, which covered 90,000 students in elementary and junior and senior high schools in all parts of the nation, showed the sharpest decline among 17-year-olds in large cities, although suburban students' test scores fell too.

"The results of the third study, sponsored by the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and announced last week, showed that public school students' reading levels have been falling since the mid-1960s."

[14] The figures which follow are based on the *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States* published annually by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

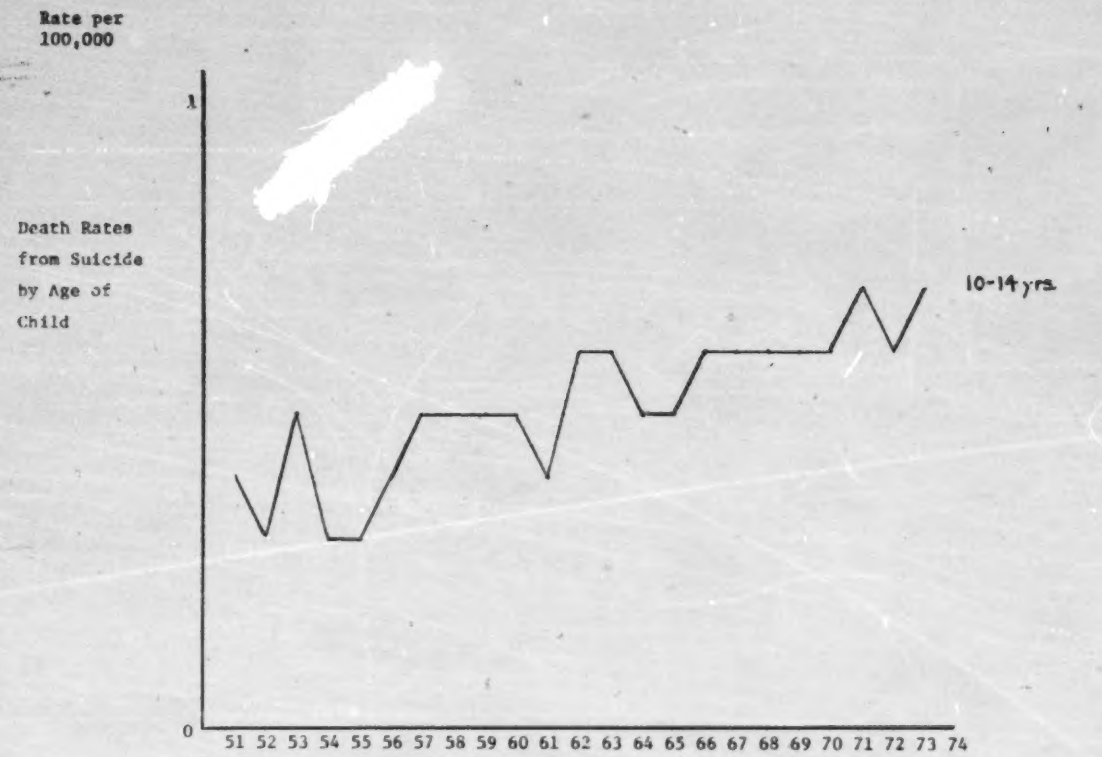

FIG. 15. Death rates from suicide by age of child. 1951–1973.

lism, and, with an important exception to be noted below, these categories were also the ones showing the greatest increase over the past decade. The second largest grouping, also growing rapidly, constituted almost a quarter of all offenses [15] and included loitering, disorderly conduct, and runaways. The most rapid rises, however, occurred in two other categories, drug use and violent crimes. In 1973 drug arrests accounted for 2.6 per cent of all offenses by children under fifteen. The precise rate of increase over time is difficult to estimate because of inconsistent enforcement and reporting. In the same year, the next most rapid rise was for violent crimes (aggravated assault, armed robbery, forcible rape, and murder). These accounted for 3.3 per cent of all arrests. While the proportion of children involved is of course very small, this figure represents at least a 200 per cent increase over the 1964 level.[16] And the total number of children with a criminal record is substantial. "If the present trends continue, one out of every nine youngsters will appear before a juvenile court before age 18." [17] The figures, of course, index only offenses that are detected and prosecuted. One wonders how high the numbers must climb before we acknowledge that they reflect deep and pervasive problems in the treatment of children and youth in our society.

V. THE ROOTS OF ALIENATION

What are the basic sources of these problems? The data we have examined point the accusing finger most directly at the destructive effect, both

[15] It is noteworthy that the highest level and most rapid rise within this grouping occurred for runaways, an increase of more than 240 per cent since 1964 (the rate has decreased somewhat since 1970). It would appear that the trend we have observed in the progressive breakup of the family includes the departure not only of its adult members, but its children as well.

[16] We may take what comfort we can from the fact that the reported rates of drug arrests and of juvenile violence have dropped somewhat since 1970.

[17] *Profiles of Children. White House Conference on Children* (Washington, D. C., 1970), p. 79.

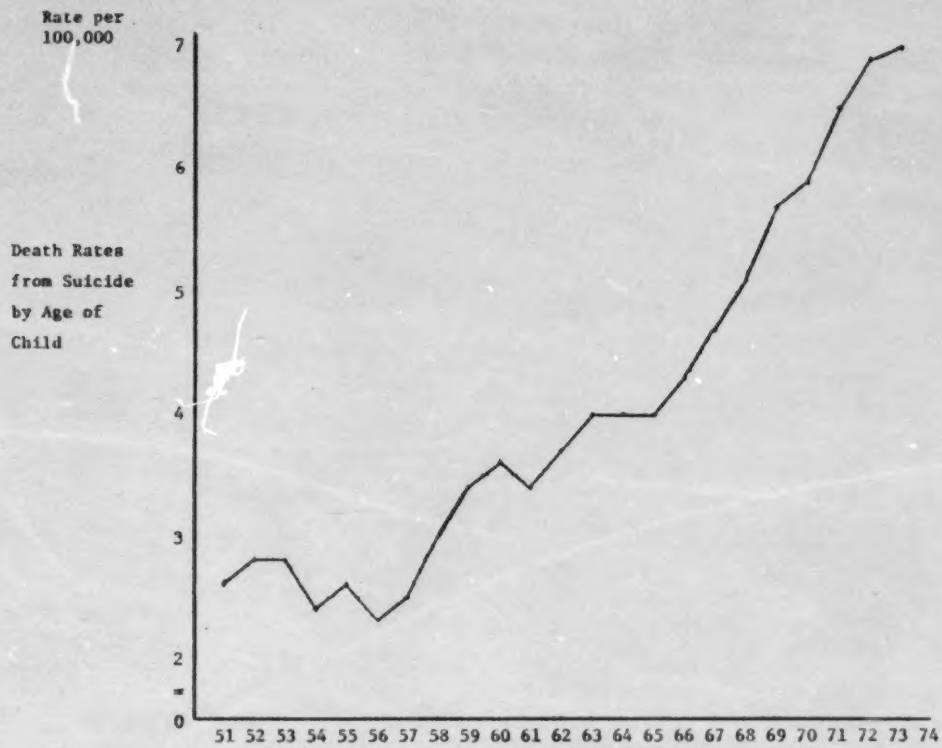

FIG. 16. Death rates from suicide by age of child. 1951–1973.

on families and children, of economic deprivation. In the light of our analysis, there can be no question that variation in income plays a critical role in accounting for the marked differences in the state of families and their children in different segments of American society. Hence, the keystone for any national policy in this sphere must insure basic economic security for American families.

But while income is crucial to the understanding and reduction of cross-sectional differences, our analyses indicate that the financial factor, taken by itself, cannot explain, or counteract, the profound longitudinal changes that have been taking place over the past quarter-century, and that are documented in so many of our charts and figures. Other forces besides the purely economic have been operating to produce the present state of affairs, and will need to be invoked to bring about any desired improvement. These forces are reflected, but not identified, in our data on the effects of urbanization. Available research does not enable us to pin them down with any degree of precision, but some indication of their possible nature is provided from studies of child socialization and development in other cultures.[18] These investigations

[18] R. Berfenstam and I. William-Olsson, *Early Child Care in Sweden* (New York, Gordon and Breach, 1974); U. Bronfenbrenner, *Two Worlds of Childhood: U. S. and U.S.S.R.* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1970); M. David and I. Lezine, *Early Child Care in France* (New York, Gordon and Breach, 1975); E. C. Devereux, Jr., *et al.* "Child Rearing in England and the United States: A Cross-national Comparison," *Jour. Marriage and the Family* 31 (1969): pp. 257–270; A. Hermann and S. Komlosi, *Early Child Care in Hungary* (New York, Gordon and Breach, 1973); W. Kessen, *Childhood in China* (New Haven, Yale Univ., 1975); L. Liegle, *The Family's Role in Soviet Education* (New York, Springer Pub. Co., in press); K. L. Lüscher *et al., Early Child Care in Switzerland* (New York, Gordon and Breach, 1973); M. K. Pringle and S. Naidoo, *Early Child Care in Britain* (New York, Gordon and Breach, 1975); H. B. Robinson *et al., Early Child Care in the United States of America* (New York, Gordon and Breach, 1973); R. R. Rodgers, "Changes in Parental Behavior Reported by Children in West Germany and the United States," *Human Development* 14 (1971): pp. 208–224.

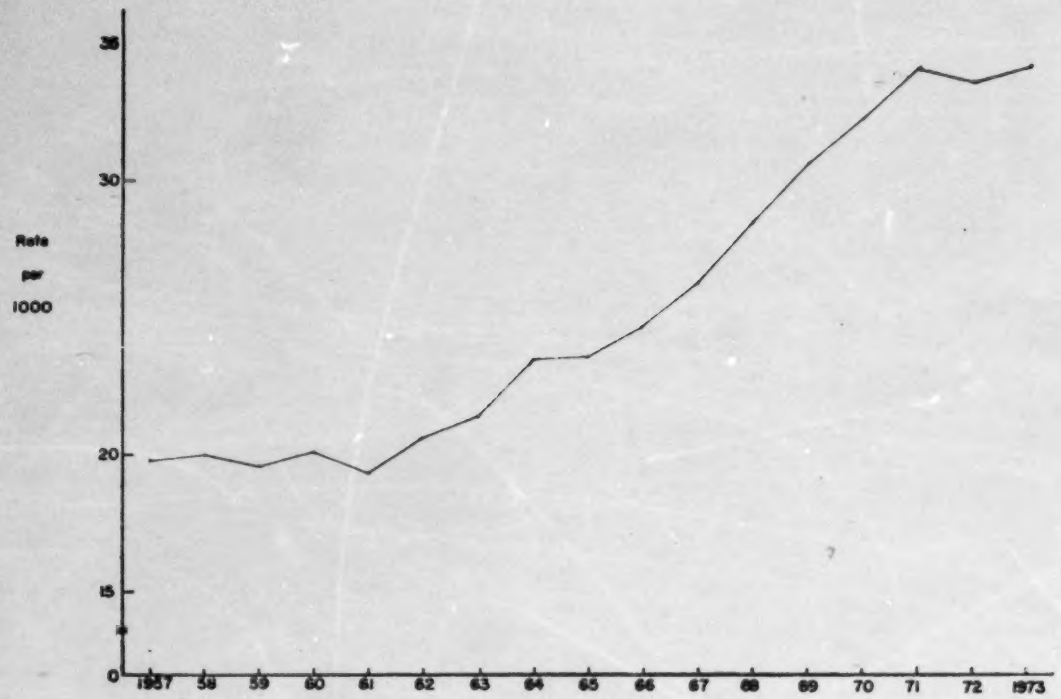

FIG. 17. Rate of delinquency cases disposed of by juvenile courts involving children 10 through 17 years of age. 1957–1973.

call attention to a distinctive feature of American child-rearing: segregation, not by race or social class, but by age. Increasingly, children in America are living and growing up in relative isolation from persons older, or younger than themselves. For example, a survey of changes in child-rearing practices in the United States over a twenty-five-year period reveals a decrease in all spheres of interaction between parent and child.[19] A similar trend is indicated by data from cross-cultural studies comparing American families with their European counter-parts.[20] Thus, in a comparative study of socialization practices among German and American parents, the former emerged as significantly more involved in activities with their children including both affection and discipline. A second study, conducted several years later, showed changes over time in both cultures reflecting "a trend toward the dissolution of the family as a social system," with Germany moving closer to the American pattern of "centrifugal forces pulling the members into relationships outside the family." [21]

Although the nature and operation of these centrifugal forces have not been studied systematically, they are readily apparent to observers of the American scene. The following excerpt from the report of the President's White House Conference on Children summarizes the situation as seen by a group of experts, including both scientists and practitioners.

> In today's world parents find themselves at the mercy of a society which imposes pressures and priorities that allow neither time nor place for meaningful activities and relations between children and adults, which downgrade the role of parents and the functions of parenthood, and which prevent the parent from doing things he wants to do as a guide, friend, and companion to his children. . . .
>
> The frustrations are greatest for the family of poverty where the capacity for human response is

[19] U. Bronfenbrenner, "Socialization and Social Class through Time and Space." In: E. E. Maccoby, T. M. Newcomb, and E. Hartley (Eds.), *Readings in Social Psychology* (3rd ed., New York, Holt, 1958): pp. 400–425.

[20] Bronfenbrenner, 1970, *op. cit.*; Devereux *et al.*, 1969, *op. cit.*

[21] Rodgers, 1971, *op. cit.*

crippled by hunger, cold, filth, sickness, and despair. For families who can get along, the rats are gone, but the rat-race remains. The demands of a job, or often two jobs, that claim mealtimes, evenings, and weekends as well as days; the trips and moves necessary to get ahead or simply hold one's own; the ever increasing time spent in commuting, parties, evenings out, social and community obligations—all the things one has to do to meet so-called primary responsibilities—produce a situation in which a child often spends more time with a passive babysitter than a participating parent.[22]

Although no systematic evidence is available, there are indications that a withdrawal of adults from the lives of children is also occurring outside the home. To quote again from the report of the White House Conference:

> In our modern way of life, it is not only parents of whom children are deprived, it is people in general. A host of factors conspire to isolate children from the rest of society. The fragmentation of the extended family, the separation of residential and business areas, the disappearance of neighborhoods, zoning ordinances, occupational mobility, child labor laws, the abolishment of the apprentice system, consolidated schools, television, separate patterns of social life for different age groups, the working mother, the delegation of child care to specialists—all these manifestations of progress operate to decrease opportunity and incentive for meaningful contact between children and persons older, or younger, than themselves.[23]

This erosion of the social fabric isolates not only the child but also his family. As documented in earlier sections of this report, even in intact families the centrifugal forces generated within the family by its increasingly isolated position have propelled its members in different directions. As parents, especially mothers, spend more time in work and community activities, children are placed in or gravitate to group settings, both organized and informal. For example, since 1965 the number of children enrolled in day care centers has more than doubled, and the demand today far exceeds the supply. Outside preschool or school, the child spends increasing amounts of time solely in the company of his age-mates. The vacuum created by the withdrawal of parents and other adults has been filled by the informal peer group. A recent study has found that at every age and grade level, children today show a greater dependency on their peers than they did a decade ago.[24] A parallel investigation indicates that such susceptibility to group influence is higher among children from homes in which one or both parents are frequently absent.[25] In addition, "peer oriented" youngsters describe their parents as less affectionate and less firm in discipline. Attachment to age-mates appears to be influenced more by a lack of attention and concern at home than by any positive attraction of the peer group itself. In fact, these children have a rather negative view of their friends and of themselves as well. They are pessimistic about the future, rate lower in responsibility and leadership, and are more likely to engage in such anti-social behavior as lying, teasing other children, "playing hooky," hurting others or "doing something illegal."[26]

What we are seeing here, of course, are the roots of alienation and its milder consequences. The more serious manifestations are reflected in the rising rates of child homicide, suicide, drug use, and juvenile delinquency previously cited.

How are we to reverse these debilitating trends? If our analysis is correct, what is called for is nothing less than a change in our way of life and our institutions, both public and private, so as to give new opportunity and status for parenthood, and to bring children and adults back into each other's lives. Specifically, we need to develop a variety of *support systems* for families, and for others engaged in the care of the nation's children. And these support systems, in turn, should be based on the results of systematic research on the environmental forces, both actual and potential, that sustain and enhance the process of human development. Thus we are brought to the two final issues under discussion: the implications of our analyses for scientific work and for public policy.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

We began our discussion by asserting that the changes we would observe in the ecology of human development would lead to a new and more

[22] *Report to the President. White House Conference on Children* (Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970), pp. 240–255.

[23] *Report of Forum 15. White House Conference on Children* (Washington, D. C., 1970).

[24] M. A. Siman, "Peer Group Influence during Adolescence: A Study of 41 Naturally Existing Friendship Groups." A thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, January, 1973.

[25] J. C. Condry and M. A. Siman, "An Experimental Study of Adult vs. Peer Orientation." Unpublished manuscript, Cornell University, 1968.

[26] J. C. Condry and M. A. Siman, "Characteristics of Peer- and Adult-oriented Children," *Jour. Marriage and the Family*, **36** (1974): pp. 543–554.

fruitful theoretical perspective for research. What is the new direction for investigation suggested by the results of our analyses?

One might expect from the nature and outcome of these analyses that we would now argue for systematic studies of the consequences for the child of the profound changes we have documented in the structure and position of the family in American society. But, desirable as such research would be, it does not in our view, represent the strategy of choice for the study of human development in context. Specifically, we propose a reorientation to theory and research in socialization based on two guiding principles.

The first is perhaps most cogently expressed in the words of Professor A. N. Leontiev of the University of Moscow. At the time, a decade ago, I was an exchange scientist at the Institute of Psychology. We had been discussing differences in the assumptions underlying research on socialization in the Soviet Union and in the United States. Leontiev's statement was the following: "It seems to me that American researchers are constantly seeking to explain how the child came to be what he is; we in the U.S.S.R. are striving to discover not how the child came to be what he is, but how he can become what he not yet is."

One reason why I remember Professor Leontiev's challenging comment is that it echoed the advice given me a quarter of a century earlier by my first mentor in graduate school Professor Walter Fenno Dearborn of Harvard. In his quiet, crisp New England accent, he once remarked: "Bronfenbrenner, if you want to understand something, try to change it."

In short, I propose that the strategy of choice for future research in human development is one that applies the experimental method to alter systematically the nature of the enduring environments in which children live and grow. The approach might be called: *experimental human ecology.*

The emphasis on systematic experimentation is prompted by two considerations. The first is painfully illustrated by the limitations of the kinds of data I have been presenting to you. They provide evidence of concurrent changes over time on the one hand, in the structure and position of the American family, and, on the other, in the abilities and character of American children. But as evidence for the existence, let alone the nature, of a causal connection between the two domains, the data are of course inadequate. There is confounding among variables not only within but also across domains, for one cannot be certain what is cause and what is effect. For example, a biologically damaged infant, or an aggressive child, could be a contributing factor in family disruption.

The second consideration that prompts an experimental approach arises not on grounds of science but of social policy. The trends we have documented are, I suggest, sufficiently widespread and destructive that we need to discover how they may be counteracted. And the best way to learn about change, is to try it. Thus considerations both of science and social policy support the validity and timeliness of Dearborn's dictum: "If you want to understand something, try to change it."

Criteria for a Program of Research

But knowing ends and means does not remove obstacles that stand in the way. In ironic validation of our ecological thesis, these obstacles also take the form of enduring environments—specifically, of established institutions, roles, and activities that resist alteration of the processes of socialization which prepare and perpetuate researchers in the prevailing mode. Accordingly, the first task to be accomplished if ecologically oriented investigations are to be carried out in any substantial degree is to create institutional supports for such activity in the form of training, professional recognition, and, of course, research funds. At the present time, all of these are focused around success in implementing the traditional experimental model in laboratory settings. Unless this focus can be broadened, ecological research will paradoxically remain a purely academic exercise.

But there are grounds for hope. Over the past two years, with the support of a private foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, I have been developing a program of research in what we are calling "the ecology of human development." Recently, the Foundation made available funds for the support of small-scale investigations which approximate the distinctive properties of an ecological model as developed in this paper. As a convenient way of summarizing these distinctive properties, I summarize below the criteria that are being applied in the evaluation of research proposals under the Foundation's program.

These criteria are of two kinds: A. those that are deemed *essential* and B. *bonus* criteria, which

are not regarded as necessary, but, if present, would give the proposal higher priority.

A. Essential Criteria:

1) The proposed study must be concerned with the interplay between what is or could become some enduring aspect of the person's environment and the development of an enduring human activity that has social significance in that environment. In other words, the independent and dependent variables must be anchored in social reality, thus ensuring ecological validity at both ends of the causal chain.

2) A second criterion is that the study involve, as a basic element of the research design, the comparison of at least two different ecological systems or their components. This comparison may consist either of a true experiment in which subjects are assigned at random to different treatments, or of an "experiment of nature" in which subjects are found in different environments and some effort is made to control for possibly confounding factors. Thus this requirement rules out proposals of several kinds; for example: purely case studies of individuals, groups, or settings; exploratory studies designed solely to identify variables or hypotheses for future research, or projects restricted to the development of methods.

B. Bonus Criteria:

The bonus criteria stipulate a variety of characteristics which could enhance the value of the proposal. The following are examples:

1) Proposals that examine the effect of different ecological systems as systems are given priority over investigations limited to single variables treated as separable in their effects.

2) Proposals which assess effects of innovation or deliberately induced ecological change are given higher priority than investigations of the *status quo*.

3) Priority is given to proposals in which outcome variables go beyond conventional measures of intellectual performance and academic achievement to include assessments of social and motivational orientations and behavior on the part both of individuals (e.g., children, parents, teachers, community leaders) and social systems (e.g., schools, businesses, social agencies, communities).

4) Designs which go beyond the concrete contexts containing the person (e.g., family, classroom) to the higher order systems in which these contexts are embedded (e.g., the neighborhood, the world of work, health and welfare services, the legal system) are regarded as preferable to designs confined to the immediate setting only.

5) Proposals for research in which the social policy implications are apparent or made explicit are regarded as more appropriate than those in which practical and social implications remain implicit or unclear.

In addition to the foregoing substantive criteria, the program involves certain other distinctive features designed to encourage and assist research development along the indicated lines. For example, several leading researchers serve as consultants not only in the evaluation but also the cultivation and execution of research proposals.[27] The program also provides for expert critique of preliminary drafts of research papers to those grantees who desire such advice. The investigator is of course free to accept or reject such counsel as he wishes. In the granting of funds, priority is given to younger scientists, including graduate students working on their dissertations.[28]

Proposals in Process

As an illustration of the kinds of research which the Program seeks to generate, I describe below two of the proposals we have funded to date which were judged to approximate the stated criteria.

Proposal I. Child rearing in home, family day care, and group day care:

In this project the investigator, Moncrieff Cochran, takes advantage of a unique opportunity presented by contemporary Swedish society to investigate differences in socialization practices and outcomes as a function of three different child rearing settings. To control for motivation, home-reared children are selected from families desiring day care, but not receiving it because of shortage of places. Children in the two continuous day care settings (family and group) entered at six to nine months of age. A longitudinal design will follow all children to age five, including one mixed group raised at home for the first two or three years but then placed in a center for the remaining two or three. Hypotheses based

[27] These two functions are separated under the operating principle that no consultant can serve as judge of a proposal which he has helped to develop.

[28] More detailed information on criteria and procedures for submitting proposals may be obtained by writing to Joyce Brainard, Administrative Aide, FCD Program on the Ecology of Human Development, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853.

on preliminary work already completed posit that greater adult-child interaction and limit-setting in the two home contexts *versus* greater peer interaction and control at centers will result in greater competence in the child's dealing with adults in the first instance, and with age-mates in the second. Analogous predictions are made for conformity to adult *versus* peer norms. The child's tendency to resort to verbal mediation in peer conflict situations is also anticipated to be greater for home-reared children. In general, youngsters raised in family day care are expected to fall in between home and group reared children, but to resemble the former more than the latter.

Proposal II. Effects of parental involvement in teacher training:

Working in poor residential areas in Mexico City, the investigator, Eduardo Almeida, offered an eight-week training course in child development, in one case for teachers alone, in another for teachers and parents together. In each region, one sixth-grade classroom was assigned to the experimental treatment (parents plus teacher) and another to the control group (teachers only). The weekly two-hour training sessions were conducted by persons who live and work in the immediate neighborhood. The general hypothesis of the study is that parental participation will result in enhanced motivation and learning on the part of pupils as a function of increased mutual understanding and convergent value commitments on the part of parents, teachers, and children.

Almeida has begun the analysis of his data, and some preliminary findings are available that are instructive both substantively and methodologically. The difference between the experimental and control group turned out to be significant on most outcome measures when tested against individuals within treatments, as is typically done in our journals. But none of the treatment effects were significant when tested against an appropriate error term based on differences between experimental and control classrooms within neighborhoods. This is so because the treatment was effective in some neighborhoods but not in others.

Pursuing this matter further, Almeida found reliable correlations between the child's gain score over the eight-week period and various measures of social class (in particular parents' educational level and the presence in the home of such items as newspapers and encyclopedias). But the relationships were significantly stronger at the level of classrooms than of individuals. Specifically, a child's gain score was better predicted not by the socio-economic status of his own family but by the average social class level of the children in his classroom. In other words, what counted most was not his own background but the background of his classmates. Since, in Almeida's research, the classrooms are in different schools, they also reflected neighborhood differences. In checking on these differences, Almeida discovered that the schools exhibiting greatest gains were located in neighborhoods with well-developed social networks, such that families were in some communication with each other. Moreover, under these circumstances, not only the experimental classrooms, but those in the control group showed improvement, presumably as a function of horizontal diffusion.[29]

Such findings illustrate a serious limitation of the conventional, non-ecological research design typically employed in experimental studies in our field. Usually the sample is drawn from a few classrooms (often only one) in one or two schools all in the same neighborhood, and all main effects and interactions are tested against an error term based on individuals. This means that any generalizations, though founded on statistically significant results, are in fact limited to the particular classrooms, schools or neighborhoods represented—unless one assumes that there are no reliable differences across these domains with respect to the variables being tested. In our own experimental and field studies,[30] all of which have been carried out cross-culturally, we have found this to be an unwarranted assumption. Differ-

[29] S. W. Gray and R. A. Klaus, "The Early Training Project: The Seventh-year Report," *Child Development* 41 (1970): pp. 909–924.

[30] U. Bronfenbrenner "Response to Pressure from Peers vs. Adults among Soviet and American School Children," *International Jour. Psychology*, 2 (1967): pp. 199–207; U. Bronfenbrenner, *Two worlds of childhood: U. S. and U.S.S.R.* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1970); E. C. Devereux *et al.*, "Child-rearing in England and the United States: A Cross-national Comparison," *Jour. Marriage and the Family* 31, 2 (1969): pp. 257–270; E. C. Devereux *et al.*, "Socialization Practices of Parents, Teachers, and Peers in Israel: The Kibbutz vs. the City," *Child Development* 45 (1974): pp. 269–281; J. Garbarino and U. Bronfenbrenner, "The Socialization of Moral Judgment and Behavior in Cross-cultural Perspective." In: T. Lickona (Ed.), *Morality: A Handbook of Moral Development and Behavior* (New York, Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, in press); R. Shouval *et al.*, "The Anomalous Reactions to Social Pressure of Israeli and Soviet Children Raised in Family vs. Collective settings," in press.

ences among neighborhoods, schools, and even classrooms within schools are the rule rather than the exception. Therefore to establish the existence of experimental effects, of cultural contrasts, or even of such mundane phenomena as sex differences, it is necessary to show that the observed differences override variations at the classroom, school, or neighborhood level. Otherwise the generalization is limited to the particular contexts in which the research was carried out. This means, of course, that many of the findings reported in our research literature, including some of those most often cited, may actually be situation-specific.

Recognition of this fact poses serious difficulties for the design of ecologically valid experiments, for it means that the minimum sample necessary for statistical generalizability is defined not by the number of subjects, but by the number of settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, neighborhoods) which these subjects represent. From this point of view, the most efficient design for social psychological studies may be an analog to the paradigm laid down by Brunswik for research on perception in his classic monograph "Perception and the representational design of psychological experiments";[31] that is, each subject would be selected from and thus be representative of a different setting (i.e., classroom, school, neighborhood) so that the sample reflects variation not only across individuals but over contexts as well, thus increasing the range of generalizability.

Some "Unproposed" Proposals

As additional examples of ecological experiments, I offer below a series of research problems and designs which have not yet appeared in proposals thus far received, but would be appropriate should they materialize

Hypothetical Proposal 1. Student volunteers as a support system for single-parent families:

The stresses experienced by families in which the father is absent[32] and the growing number of such families in modern societies pose a need to understand and to alleviate these stresses. An experiment designed to achieve this twofold objective involves the following elements. College students enrolled in courses in child development are asked to volunteer as aides to mothers who are single parents of a preschool child. There are two treatment groups. In one, the student offers to take care of the child in order to give the mother free time to do whatever she wishes. In the second, the student asks what chores he can do in order to relieve the mother, so that she can spend time with her son or daughter. In a control group, the student merely visits the home to provide resource materials in child development. Single-parent mothers desiring some form of assistance are assigned to one of the three groups at random. Outcome measures include the mother's attitudes toward the child and toward her role as parent, and patterns of mother-child interaction in the home. The general hypothesis of the study is that maternal attitudes and patterns of interaction will be more positive in the two experimental groups than in the control group, with higher levels achieved when the volunteer offers to relieve the mother of household chores, than when he takes over responsibilities for child care.

Hypothetical Proposal 2. The impact of high-rise housing on socialization practice and effects:

In case studies in journalistic reports, high-rise housing is often described as an unfavorable environment for raising children. The frequent presence of both high and low rise apartments in the same housing project presents an opportunity for investigating this issue with reference both to patterns of parent-child interaction and the behavior of the child outside the home in school and peer group. For the later purpose, the dependent variables would be similar to those outlined in the preceding proposals.

Hypothetical Proposal 3. Enabling parents to be home when their children return from school:

A growing problem in contemporary American society is posed by the increasing number of "latch-key children"—i.e., youngsters who come home from school to an empty house.[33] Such children are especially prone to academic difficulties, school absenteeism and drop-out, juvenile delinquency,

[31] E. Brunswik, *Perception and the Representational Design of Psychological Experiments* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1956).

[32] Bronfenbrenner, 1970, *op. cit.;* H. B. Robinson *et al.*, "Early Child Care in the United States of America," *Early Child Development and Care*, 2 (1973): pp. 350–581.

[33] U. Bronfenbrenner, Statement to the Subcommittee on Children and Youth of the United States Senate. Congressional Record, September 26, 1973, Volume 19, #142; Robinson *et al., op. cit.*

and drug addiction. An experiment designed to illuminate and counteract such effects involves obtaining the cooperation of an enterprise employing a large number of workers to introduce, on an experimental basis, flexible work schedules which would enable parents who wish to do so to be at home when their children return from school. The time would be made up by working other hours. A control group would be offered similar flexibility in working schedules but not during the time when children come from school. Effects of this policy would be observed in the changing attitudes of parents toward their children and in the behavior of the latter, with particular reference to the deviant patterns described above.

Hypothetical Proposal 4. Introducing children to the world of work.

This experiment is based on policy and practice presently followed in the U.S.S.R. In that society, every unit of economic production, such as a shop, office, institute, or other workers collective, is encouraged to "adopt" as a civic responsibility some group of children such as a classroom, hospital ward, or preschool group. The workers visit the children wherever they are, and invite them to visit in return. They take the children on outings, get to know their teachers and their parents—in sum, the adults and children become friends. In the expectation that an American business could be interested in undertaking a similar program, it is proposed to gauge its impact on the children's attitudes and behavior along the lines indicated in preceding proposals.[34] A control group might consist of children who merely "tour" places of work without establishing friendly associations with the workers themselves.

Hypothetical Proposal 5. Family and individual development as a function of position in the social network:

This research investigates the thesis that the existence, strength, and value focus of the informal social network play a critical part in enabling, or when weak or countervailing, in disabling the family to function in its child-rearing role. The social networks would be mapped by interviewing both parents and, separately, their children to establish patterns of acquaintance, mutual activity, and assistance in time of need (for example, illness, emergencies, or perhaps simply advice on family problems). Attention would be focused on the extent to which resources for companionship or help are found within the immediate neighborhood, across or within boundaries of age, sex, occupation, and other social parameters. Of particular interest is the degree to which the social networks of parents and children intersect for different age groups.

There are two classes of dependent variables. The first concerns the attitudes and expectations of the parents toward themselves and their children. Assessment would be made of their sense of personal control not only over their own lives but also with respect to their child's development, their satisfaction with the parental role, with the behavior and progress of their children, and with their aspirations and realistic expectations for the child's future. The second class of dependent variables relates to the child himself, specifically, how well he functions in two contexts outside the home—the school, and his informal peer group.

The analysis will focus on determining whether parental orientations and child behaviors do vary systematically as a function of the informal social networks in which parent and child are embedded. But a research design of this kind, unfortunately, poses a problem in interpretation, for the causal process may actually operate in either or both of two opposite directions. Specifically, the social network may in this instance be not only a creator but a creature of family life—the product of characteristics of the family or of the child derived from other sources, perhaps even biological, but more likely social—such as family tradition, religious commitment, or patterns of life in the neighborhood in which the parents themselves had grown up.

This last possibility calls attention to an experiment of nature that permits some resolution of the issue of causal direction. It is this natural experiment that is exploited in our final example.

Hypothetical Proposal 6. The developmental impact of moving to a new neighborhood:

As suggested by the preliminary results of Almeida's project, the neighborhood may exert a

[34] At the author's suggestion a demonstration program of this kind was carried out at the *Detroit Free Press* by David Goslin of the Russell Sage Foundation (Goslin, 1971). The program is described in a documentary film entitled "A Place to Meet, A Way to Understand," which is available from the federal government (The National Audio-Visual Center, Washington, D. C. 20409). Unfortunately, it was not possible to attach a research component to the project.

profound influence on the child's psychological development. This phenomenon could be investigated in an "experiment of nature" by identifying children in a large city school system whose families will be moving in the following year to another neighborhood in the same city. In a two-stage longitudinal research, interview and observational data could be obtained on the socio-economic, motivational, and behavioral characteristics of the target children and their classmates both in the original neighborhood and the new one with the aim of identifying the impact of particular features of the neighborhood that instigate behavioral change. Although each child serves as his own control, comparative data would also be obtained on children who continue to live in or newly move into the original neighborhood, as well as those who have been living for some years in the new one.[35]

All of the foregoing proposals, both actual and hypothetical, are of course presented in incomplete form. The purpose is not to describe the design in its entirety, but only to illustrate how the general ecological model outlined in the main body of this paper can be implemented in concrete scientific experiments. I wish also to make it clear that the facts and ideas which I have presented here are, in substantial measure, based on the work of others. What I have done is to bring together data and thought that are dispersed over time and topic in the published literature of the past few years. It has been my purpose to identify these scattered elements, consolidate them, and consider their implications for the direction and design of future research in human development.

In confronting this new research perspective, I offer a caveat no less to myself than to my colleagues. Those of us who are now active and experienced researchers were of course trained and socialized to use and value the research models and methods that now prevail in our field. If our theories of socialization are valid, however, it should be rather difficult for us to break out of our established modes of scientific thought and action. Try as we may, we are likely to regress to the kinds of formulations and analyses with which we are most familiar. This means that, if the ecological approach is indeed a promising one for our science, the major breakthroughs, both theoretical and empirical, will be accomplished not by the present cohort of established scientists, but by the younger generation of researchers just coming on the scene. It is for this reason that the grant program which I described gives priority to younger investigators. Our function is to give them support, and such wisdom as we have.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY

We stated at the outset that an ecological perspective in human development carries implications not only for science but also for public policy. We turn in conclusion to an examination of this issue.

Our analyses revealed a progressive deterioration over recent years, on the one hand, in the structure and position of the American family and, on the other, in the behavior and development of the nation's children. The data point to an obvious question of social policy and practice: What can be done to reverse these trends?

To the extent to which this problem has been recognized and addressed in the recent past, the principal focus of attention and programmatic effort has been the child, and in the context not of the family but of the school. At both the local and national levels, a variety of educational programs have been instituted, beginning at the pre-school level, through "Head Start," and extending

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[35] The idea for this research was suggested by the author's reanalysis (U. Bronfenbrenner, "Nature with Nurture: A Reinterpretation of the Evidence." In: A. Montagu (Ed.), *Race and IQ* (New York, Oxford University Press, in press)) of data from published studies of identical twins reared apart cited by Jensen (A. R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost I.Q. and Scholastic Achievement? *Harvard Educational Review*, Winter, 1969: pp. 1–123) in support of his claim that 80 per cent of intelligence is genetically determined. To arrive at the 80 per cent figure, Jensen made the assumption that the separated twins grew up in "uncorrelated environments" (p. 50). To test the validity of this assumption, the present author analyzed statistical and case study data provided in the original twin reports. Among other findings were the following:

a. Among 35 pairs of separated twins for whom information was available about the community in which they lived, the correlation in Binet IQ for those raised in the same town was 0.83; for those brought up in different towns, the figure was 0.67.

b. In another sample of 38 separated twins, tested with a combination of verbal and non-verbal intelligence scales, the correlation for those attending the same school in the same town was 0.87; for those attending schools in different towns, the coefficient was 0.66.

c. When the communities in the preceding sample were classified as similar *vs.* dissimilar on the basis of size and economic base (e.g., mining *vs.* agricultural), the correlation for separated twins living in similar communities was 0.86; for those residing in dissimilar localities the coefficient was 0.26.

into the elementary years via "Follow Through" and similar compensatory efforts, all designed to enhance, or at least prevent decline in, the all-round development of children, especially from low income families.

As we now know, the results of these educational strategies have proved disappointing. By and large, early intervention programs were effective while they lasted, but gains tended to wash out once the children entered school.[36] The only exception to this general trend occurred with programs emphasizing the direct involvement of parents in activities with their children. But the success of this approach was qualified by the realization that the families who were willing and able to participate in these programs tended to be the least disadvantaged among those eligible.

With respect to the effects of school programs, an impressive series of investigations, notably the studies published by James Coleman in 1966[37] and by Christopher Jencks in 1972,[38] demonstrates that the characteristics of schools, of classrooms, and even of teachers predict very little of the variation in school achievement. What does predict it is family background, particularly the characteristics that define the family in relation to its social context: the world of work, neighborhood, and community.

The critical question thus becomes: Can our social institutions be changed—old ones modified and new ones introduced—so as to rebuild and revitalize the social context that families and children require for their effective function and growth? Let me consider some institutions on the contemporary American scene that are likely to have the greatest impact, for better or for worse, on the welfare of America's children and young people.

1. *Day Care*

Day care is coming to America. The question is what kind. Shall we, in response to external pressures to "put people to work" or for considerations of personal convenience, allow a pattern to develop in which the care of young children is delegated to specialists, further separating the child from his family and reducing the family's and the community's feeling of responsibility for their children? Or will day care be designed, as it can be, to reinvolve and strengthen the family as the primary and proper agent for making human beings human?

As Project Head Start demonstrated, preschool programs can have no lasting constructive impact on the child's development unless they affect not only the child himself but also the people who constitute his enduring day-to-day environment. This means that parents and other people from the child's immediate environment must play a prominent part in the planning and administration of day-care programs and also participate actively as volunteers and aides. It means that the program cannot be confined to the center but must reach out into the home and the community so that the entire neighborhood is caught up in activities in behalf of its children. We need to experiment with putting day-care centers within reach of the significant people in the child's life. For some families this will mean neighborhood centers, for others centers at the place of work. A great deal of variation and innovation will be required to find the appropriate solutions for different groups in different settings.

2. *Fair Part-Time Employment Practices Act*

Such solutions confront a critical obstacle in contemporary American society. The keystone of an effective day-care program is parent participation, but how can parents participate if they work full time—which is one of the main reasons the family needs day care in the first place? I see only one possible solution: increased opportunities and rewards for part-time employment. It was in the light of this consideration that the report of the White House Conference urged business and industry, and governments as employers, to introduce flexible work schedules (for example, to enable at least one parent to be at home when a child returns from school) and to increase the number and the status of part-time positions. Specifically, the report recommended that state legislatures enact a "Fair Part-Time Employment Practices Act" to prohibit discrimination in job opportunity, rate of pay, fringe benefits and status for parents who sought or engaged in part-time employment.

I should like to report the instructive experience of one state legislator who attempted to put through such a bill, Assemblywoman Constance Cook of New York. Mrs. Cook sent me a copy

[36] U. Bronfenbrenner, *Is Early Intervention Effective?* (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development, Washington, D. C., 1974).

[37] J. S. Coleman, *Equality of educational opportunity* (Washington, D. C., U. S. Office of Education, 1966).

[38] C. Jencks, *Inequality* (New York, Basic Books, 1972).

of her bill as it had been introduced in committee. It began, "No employer shall set as a condition of employment, salary, promotion, fringe benefits, seniority" and so on that an employee who is the parent or guardian of a child under eighteen years of age shall be required to work more than forty hours a week. Forty hours a week, of course, is full time; Mrs. Cook informed me that there was no hope of getting a bill through with a lower limit. It turned out that even forty hours was too low. The bill was not passed even in committee. The pressure from business and industry was too great, and they insisted on the right to require their employees to work overtime.

(There is a ray of hope, however. In the settlement of the United Automobile Workers' 1973 strike against the Chrysler Corporation a limit was placed for the first time on the company policy of mandatory overtime.)

3. *Enhancing the Position of Women*

These concerns bring me to what I regard as the most important single factor affecting the welfare of the nation's children. I refer to the place and status of women in American society. Whatever the future trend may be, the fact remains that in our society today the care of children depends overwhelmingly on women, and specifically on mothers. Moreover, with the withdrawal of the social supports for the family to which I alluded above, the position of women and mothers has become more and more isolated. With the breakdown of the community, the neighborhood, and the extended family an increasing responsibility for the care and upbringing of children has fallen on the young mother. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that many young women in America are in revolt. I understand and share their sense of rage, but I fear the consequences of some of the solutions they advocate, which will have the effect of isolating children still further from the kind of care and attention they need. There is, of course, a constructive implication to this line of thought, in that a major route to the rehabilitation of children and youth in American society lies in the enhancement of the status and power of women in all walks of life—in the home as well as on the job.

4. *Work and Responsibility*

One of the most significant effects of age segregation in our society has been the isolation of children from the world of work. Once children not only saw what their parents did for a living but also shared substantially in the task; now many children have only a vague notion of the parent's job and have had little or no opportunity to observe the parent (or for that matter any other adult) fully engaged in his or her work. Although there is no systematic research evidence on this subject, it appears likely that the absence of such exposure contributes significantly to the growing alienation among children and young people. Experience in other modern urban societies indicates that the isolation of children from adults in the world of work is not inevitable; it can be countered by creative social innovations. Perhaps the most imaginative and pervasive of these is the common practice in the U.S.S.R., in which a department in a factory, an office, an institute or a business enterprise adopts a group of children as its "wards." The children's group is typically a school classroom, but it may also include a nursery, a hospital ward, or any other setting in which children are dealt with collectively. The workers visit the children's group wherever it may be and also invite the youngsters to their place of work in order to familiarize the children with the nature of their activities and with themselves as people. The aim is not vocational education but rather acquaintance with adults as participants in the world of work.

There seems to be nothing in such an approach that would be incompatible with the values and aims of our own society, and this writer has urged its adaptation to the American scene. Acting on this suggestion, David A. Goslin then at the Russell Sage Foundation, and now at the National Academy of Sciences, persuaded the *Detroit Free Press* to participate in an unusual experiment as a prelude to the White House Conference on Children. By the time it was over two groups of twelve-year-old children, one from a slum area and the other predominantly middle class, had spent six to seven hours a day for three days in virtually every department of the newspaper, not just observing but participating actively in the department's work. There were boys and girls in the pressroom, the city room, the advertising department and the delivery department. The employees of the *Free Press* entered into the experiment with serious misgivings, but as a documentary film [39] that was made of the project makes clear, the children

[39] "A Place to Meet, A Way to Understand." The National Audio-Visual Center, Washington, D. C. 20409.

were not bored, nor were the adults—and the paper did get out every day.

The Fair Part-Time Employment Practices Act and the *Detroit Free Press* experiment are offered as examples, one in the public, the other in the private sector, of the kinds of innovations in policy and practice that are needed if we are to achieve the objective of rebuilding and revitalizing the social contexts that children and families require for their effective function and growth. But even more fundamental are three basic family support systems that are now being provided in every modern society except our own:

1. The United States is now the only industrialized nation that does not insure health care for every family with young children.

2. The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee a minimum income level for every family with young children.

3. The United States is the only industrialized nation that has not yet established a nationwide program of child-care services for children of working mothers.

Our refusal to meet what other modern nations regard as basic human necessities appears to be grounded in our determined resistance to communism or socialism in any form. Such principled but purblind opposition has driven us to pay an awesome price through our foreign policy in Viet Nam. We must not, for similar reasons, perpetuate a domestic policy which debilitates the nation's families and thereby endangers the integrity of the next generation of Americans.

The future belongs to those nations who are prepared to make and fulfill a primary commitment to their families and their children. For only in this way will it be possible to counteract the alienation, distress, and breakdown of a sense of community that follow in the wake of impersonal technology, materialism, urbanization, and their unplanned, dehumanizing consequences. As a nation, we have not yet been willing to make that commitment. We have continued to measure the worth of our society, and of other countries as well, by the faceless criterions of the GNP —the gross national product. Up till now we continue, in the words of the great American psychologist William James, to "worship the bitch goddess Success."

But today we are being confronted with what for us Americans is an unprecedented, unexpected, and almost unnatural prospect: nothing less than the failure of success. With all the suffering this failure will bring, it may have some redeeming consequences. For, along with Watergate and Viet Nam, it may help bring us to our senses; it may reawaken us to a concern with fundamental values. Among them, none should be more dear than a renewed commitment to the nation's children and their families, a commitment to change the institutions that now determine and delimit how children and parents live, who can obtain health care for his family, a habitable dwelling, an opportunity to spend time with one's children, or receive help and encouragement from one's community in the demanding and richly gratifying task of enabling the young to develop into competent and compassionate human beings.

ON MOUNTING EFFECTIVE CHILD ADVOCACY

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Director, Children's Defense Fund of the Washington Research Project

(Read April 25, 1975, in the Symposium on the Ecology of Child Development)

A FRIEND relates the story of visiting Iran when an earthquake occurred. The Shah sent out the equivalent of the American Red Cross, ordered them to gather up all children left homeless by the catastrophe, and to make arrangements for their care. Agency members went out but reported back to the Shah that no children had been found; they had simply been absorbed into the larger community.

This is in such contrast to America where thousands upon thousands of children are left homeless, without schooling and hidden away in institutions without adequate provision for their minimal needs. Children still go hungry in America.[1] We are the richest nation in the world yet an estimated 10 million of our children slip through the cracks of our health care system.[2] Currently nearly 35 per cent of our children are not adequately immunized against polio, diptheria, tetanus, and pertussis, diseases we know how to control.[3] Thousands upon thousands of children muddle along in custodial and even damaging day-care arrangements for lack of competent, publicly supported child-development services. Some young children are even left alone because their parents have to work and have no one else to take care of them.[4] Tens of thousands of children are detained annually in adult jails,[5] some in the same cells with adult criminals,[6] because we have failed to help their families deal with them or to provide alternative community or youth-placement services for them. Childrens' Defense Fund staff have found children in jail simply because they had nowhere else to go. Millions of children languish in schools which teach them neither to read, write, add nor subtract.[7] At least two million children are excluded from all schooling.[8] Our juvenile justice system is so woefully underfunded, overworked, and lacking in services that it breeds as much crime as it prevents.[9] Our infant mortality rates

[1] According to January, 1974 U. S. Department of Agriculture figures, only 14,470,000 of the approximately 37,000,000 people who are eligible for food assistance receive it. An unknown but high proportion of these are children. (Community Nutrition Institute Weekly Report, May 16, 1974.) The low rate of participation in food programs aimed specifically at pregnant mothers and young children underscores their needs. The Citizen's Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States found that in 1972 only 20–34 per cent of children eligible for the school breakfast program received breakfast through the program (Hunger USA-Revisited, 1972). In 1974 funds were available to serve only 11 per cent of the pregnant women and children under age four eligible for supplemental foods. (Estimates by the Children's Foundation based on 1970 Census figures for numbers in need and 1974 official USDA figures for participation in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the authorized caseload in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children.) For good discussion of the politics of hunger see Nick Kotz, *Let Them Eat Promises* (New York, 1971).

[2] Charles Lowe and Duane Alexander, "Health Care for Poor Children," in: Alvin Schorr, ed., *Children and Decent People* (New York, 1974).

[3] 1974 U. S. Immunization Survey, cited in a report by the Center for Disease Control (April, 1975), p. 4.

[4] Mary Keyserling, *Windows on Day Care* (New York, 1972).

[5] Children's Defense Fund will publish a report during 1975 on the detention of children in adult jails. But see also Sarri, *Under Lock and Key: Juveniles in Jails and Detention* (Ann Arbor, 1974); Mattick, *Illinois Jails: Challenge and Opportunity for the 1970's* (Chicago, 1969); *LEAA Survey of Inmates in Local Jails in 1972* (Washington, D. C. 1974); *National Jail Census, 1970: A Report on the Nation's Local Jails and Types of Inmates* (Washington, D. C. 1970).

[6] *Larry W.* v. *Leeke*, Civil Action No. 74-986, is a CDF suit against law enforcement officials in the State of South Carolina who detained children in the same cell with adult prisoners. As a result, the children, five young boys in two different South Carolina counties, were brutally raped and beaten.

[7] Herbert Kohl, *36 Children* (New York, 1967); Jonathan Kozol, *Death at an Early Age* (Boston, 1967); Dentler and Worshaver, *Big City Dropouts and Illiterates* (New York, 1965).

[8] See *Children Out of School in America*, a report of the Children's Defense Fund (Cambridge, 1974) for analysis of 1970 U. S. Census data on nonenrolled children (hereafter referred to as *Children Out of School in America*).

[9] Justine Wise Polier, "Myths and Realities in the Search for Juvenile Justice," *Harvard Educational Rev.* 44 (1974): pp. 112–124. This volume is the best recent

—we rank thirteenth in the world—are those of an underdeveloped nation.

Why is this? Jane Addams asked in 1909 why it was that this country, technologically advanced and democratically oriented, could not service the needs of all its children. In 1975, after seven intervening White House Conferences on Children, and after sixty-six years of effort by many, including Miss Addams, this question remains unanswered. For we have not yet accepted national responsibility for all of our children.

Americans are not a child-oriented people. Many of us love our own children or individual other children in our neighborhoods with whom we identify. But frequently we have not been able to translate this individual selfish love into a broader love of the nation's children as a whole. Idolizing youth or loving individual children is not the same as placing societal priority on ensuring that all children get enough food, clothing, health care, education, and other services that will enable them to develop and function fully in American society.

Part of the explanation for the nation's failure to come to grips with the needs of families and children stems from our feelings that the family has primary responsibility for the care and nurture of children. But too often our notion of the family has assumed two parents, at least one of whom is employed, who are healthy, reasonably well educated, and possess the stability and wherewithal to raise children in our increasingly complex society. Frequently ignored are all those families who are "different" from this image: for example, young teen-age families, single-parent families, poor families, families with adults who are mentally and emotionally ill, families with children who are physically handicapped, parents who are poorly educated. Is no one responsible for these families or their children? Many of these poor families, like the black sharecroppers in the South during segregationist years, have been systematically deprived of education and skills. In the 1950's and 1960's they were pushed off the large plantations where they had eked out an existence, made obsolete by chemical weeders and mechanical pickers. We took few steps as a nation to help them even though the processes pushing them off the land were both anticipated and planned. Many of their children walk the streets of our inner cities now, ignorant, alienated, and hostile.

Historically, as now, some people bristle at the idea of government or political intervention in the lives of children. They deny children help because they believe that parents alone should see that their children get enough to eat, go to sleep on time, and go to school every day. It is parents' responsibility to take care of children when they get sick and decide if and when they should see a doctor. And it is parents who should teach their children basic values and attitudes about how to live in this society. In fact, parents' responsibility for their children's welfare is so strong it is seen as their right—one that is jealously guarded from government or do-gooding social service interference.

But what of children's rights? While most people would agree in trusting the family to make wise decisions about the upbringing of its young, does that mean we must leave the family alone to make and try to carry out those decisions without support? What happens then to children of parents who want to see their children well fed but whose incomes allow only malnutrition? What happens to educationally or physically handicapped children, whose parents want to see them develop as well as possible but who lack the skills, or money to buy the skills, needed to teach them? What happens to children in single-parent families when momma has to go out to work to support them?

We have at once praised the concept of family while making it difficult or impossible for many families who need help the most to survive as families. For example, our welfare system too often works to undercut rather than to support families. We pay the least amount of money to keep children at home with their family; a higher amount of money to place them out of the family in foster care (and we will pay more to place children with non-relatives than with relatives); and we pay the most money to institutionalize children. Some states condition welfare payments on a parent leaving the home. Almost half of our states refuse to provide support to families if there is an unemployed father in the home. Federal law requires mothers of young children to leave home and work in order to qualify for welfare while providing custodial care, or less, for their children. In sum, our notion of family is different for rich and poor: it is all right for poor mothers to go out to work to care for other

compilation of articles on a variety of children's rights topics.

people's children but not to stay at home and care for their own, if they want to obtain public support.

A second important reason for our failure to provide for the needs of all children is our mistaken assumption that equal opportunity is a reality in America. Nothing could be further from the truth. Racial discrimination and segregation is alive, well and flourishing in every nook and cranny of our society. Millions of children are labeled at birth, and their futures are caged, by the color and caste of their parents. Though the 1960's saw the nation begin to face up to the problem of racial segregation and discrimination, the 1970's are seeing retreat from this greatly unfinished task.[10] There is no more urgent national duty than weeding out racial discrimination from institution after institution that impacts daily on the lives of millions of children and families.

Third: Children suffer because adults operate on the assumption that they know and are doing what is best for children. We have traditionally recognized the need to do something for the children of the "worthy" poor or for children who had no parents. Voluntary organizations took on substantial responsibility in this area. Out of largely humanitarian motives, juvenile institutions were created as we evolved a system of child welfare and juvenile justice to deal with needy, neglected, non-conforming or delinquent children.[11] We then proceeded to forget them. These institutions gradually took on a life of their own and grew less and less responsive and more and more neglectful and destructive of the young as we crowded more children and fewer resources into them. Whenever we hear about abuses within these institutions we are quick to assume that they are the exception to the rule. But the staff of the Children's Defense Fund is daily learning that in child-caring institution after institution, pervasive negligence and mistreatment is the rule. And these conditions have provoked legal advocacy like our own on behalf of children.

Fourth: Children are not a national priority because they are powerless. They don't vote. The history of the women's movement and the efforts of blacks and other minority groups to win their civil rights has demonstrated anew some of the oldest tenets of a democracy: namely, that when people are disenfranchised they have few legal means to correct imbalances of power which tend to exclude and oppress them. Unless they find a way to voice their interests, those interests are not guaranteed to be taken seriously.

Although there are fundamental differences between children and other groups pressing for equality under the law, the effects of their disenfranchisement and exclusion from the political process are apparent. While those of us who care about children must understand the unique strengths, resiliences, and frailties that are part of children's development, we must also understand that just as they are not independent of their parents, so are they not independent of the political processes of this country.

Fifth: In too many areas children have no legal status. Under the guise of protecting children because they were weak, different, and smaller, we denied them rights.[12] As a result, many children ended up with the worst of all possible worlds: without rights and without the protection and extra support we promised. They suffer consequences that no adult would dream of inflicting on another adult and are without the benefits of minimal due process. For example, children can be institutionalized for many years for so-called status offenses for which an adult could never be charged: being a stubborn child; being in need of supervision. Similarly, they can be incarcerated for long periods of time for certain adult offenses but unlike adults for unlimited time periods. For example, in Mississippi in the 1960's twelve- or fourteen-year-old black chil-

[10] See Marian Edelman, "Twenty Years After *Brown*: Where Are We Now?" *New York Educational Quart.* (1974). See also "Blacks and the Law," *Annals Acad. Polit. and Social Sciences* 407 (1973).

[11] Historically, children—like slaves and women—were viewed as chattels, totally subject to the will of their parents. Emerging child welfarism around the turn of the century produced the idea of state intervention—*parens patriae*—where necessary to protect the child from parental abuse or neglect. Recent developments have given triangular shape to the legal relationships: the parents, the state, *and* the child. Increasingly, whether in juvenile justice, divorce, school systems, or elsewhere, the courts and legislatures are insisting that the child has independent rights. A lawyer or other child advocate may be a necessary addition to the equation to ensure that the rights are properly asserted, but, more and more, the state (and its constituent institutions, such as schools) cannot make arbitrary decisions about children without running afoul of rights that attach legally to the children themselves.

[12] The five reasons cited here for our national failure to accept responsibility for children and families are not meant to be all-inclusive. They are merely, in my view, the most important.

dren who participated in a civil-rights demonstration could be arrested with adults for breach of the peace and be sent away to a training school until they were twenty-one years of age. Their parents and other adults could get a maximum of six months for the same offense. And this could occur without the child having a lawyer or right to a formal hearing or other procedural guarantees that adults take for granted. Children can still be stripped of basic services, like schooling, that we adults have determined to be essential without any semblance of legal process in school districts all over America,[13] although this is slowly beginning to change.

WHY A CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

To speed up the achievement of rights and services for children, the Children's Defense Fund (hereafter CDF) was created in 1973. It is a national, non-profit organization which seeks to provide long-range and systematic advocacy on behalf of the nation's children. CDF is funded by a number of private foundations and is staffed with federal policy monitors, researchers, community liaison people, and lawyers who are dedicated to identifying, publicizing, and correcting selected serious problems faced by large numbers of American children.

We believe that children as a group have been ignored and unrepresented and that certain groups of children especially have been denied basic services and chances for minimally decent lives: poor children, racial and language minority children, "handicapped" children, and others with a range of special needs. This denial is not only immoral, it is unnecessary and foolhardy in terms of American self-interest now and in the future. Ignoring the needs of children now means we will pay later in dependency, illiteracy, alienation, juvenile deliquency, and crime. The cost in services is and will be enormous.

CDF'S ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ADVOCACY

CDF's program is based on several advocacy assumptions. First, we believe that good advocacy is specialized. We seek to identify particular problems that seriously affect large numbers of children and which raise issues which can lead to broad institutional reform. We believe that global approaches to reform are doomed to failure. People get overwhelmed at being told everything is bad at once and become paralyzed at the magnitude of change required. As a result we have been trying to break down the problems of children into manageable pieces for public education and action. During the next two years we shall issue a series of reports on selected problems faced by children including (1) school suspension; (2) school-keeping practices; (3) children in adult jails; (4) children of women prisoners; (5) misclassification of children with special needs; (6) unethical medical experimentation on children; (7) "banishment" of children from their homes; and (8) children's health needs, including a national assessment study of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program.[14]

Second: We believe that good advocacy should explore a number of routes of reform at the federal, state, and local level, as well as employ a variety of change techniques ranging from public information, federal agency monitoring, local organizational and parental efforts, to litigation as a last resort. We are not interested in academic debates about issues. We are committed to solving these problems which we can identify.[15]

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[13] CDF is not a children's "liberation" group. We recognize that the issue of "rights" *vis-à-vis* children is a complex one that will vary, among other things with the issue, context, age of child, and nature of the problem. A simplistic approach to extend all adult rights to children is not the answer for all children in all circumstances. Indeed, special protections may still be necessary for children in certain important areas. See Hillary Rodham, "Children Under the Law," *Harvard Education Rev.* 43 (1973): pp. 487–514, for one CDF staff analysis of possible legal approaches to children's rights.

[14] PL-248, Social Security Amendments of 1967.

[15] Convincing the public that widespread mistreatment of children occurs and requires urgent response necessitates a multifaceted strategy of (1) basic research into how children learn and grow so that our understanding of how to teach and otherwise nurture them will increase; (2) education of the public about what children need, why it is important to fulfill such needs, and goal setting so that a context for change can be established; (3) policy research so that we can translate what we learn about children into effective criteria and programs to improve how we treat them; and (4) advocacy mechanisms for translating what we learn and seek in policy terms into reality. All of these components must exist if major reforms on behalf of children are to be achieved. CDF seeks to play a key role in 2, 3, and 4.

I am far less interested in CDF establishing broad principles than I am in establishing principles with remedies which will mean something in the lives of people. CDF could have gone out and filed 100 cases in the

Third: We also believe that good advocacy requires thorough homework, persistence, and the capacity to follow up. Many people have romantic views about advocacy; they think that it is talking to important people or holding conferences with important groups or making speeches. These things are necessary but they are a small part of what brings about change. Most of my experience illustrates that change is dull, hard, day-to-day work. It means reading regulations that no one else wants to read, pestering bureaucrats who do not want to change, and going back again and again to a public that does not want to hear. If reform on behalf of the nation's children is going to occur, it is going to take hard, sustained work by professionals and nonprofessionals in a lot of communities throughout America for a long time. Not only must we engage enough people in seeking specific changes on behalf of children, we shall have to maintain an enlightened and strong core of them in order to keep those changes once they are achieved.

CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

To illustrate how fundamental the problems of American children are, I want to discuss briefly our first report on children out of school in America. This report attempts to dispel the prevailing American notion that all children who ought to go to school in fact go to school. While discussions have raged among educators and others over the last decade about the efficacy and quality of schooling, overlooked has been the far more basic problem of access, which is still a major problem for millions of American children.

Our analysis of 1970 United States census data showed us that nearly 2 million children aged 7 to 17 were out of school for at least three consecutive months.[16] Our analysis of further data submitted by forty-nine states and the District of Columbia to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) covering nearly 24 million children, showed us that at least an additional one million children had been suspended at least once during the 1972–1973 school year for over 4 million school days or 22 thousand school years.[17] It is clear that suspension contributes to children leaving school permanently. Almost 11 per cent of the children in CDF's survey discussed below reported that they left school as a result of a suspension or expulsion.

Data from the United States Census and HEW could not tell us in human terms who the children were who were out of school and why they were out. So CDF staff and cooperating groups knocked on 8,500 doors, interviewed 6,500 families and more than 300 school officials and community leaders in 30 areas in 9 states and the District of Columbia to answer these questions.[18] We did not pick the worst areas but rather tried to choose a variety of kinds of places and school

first year, all relating to children. But for what purpose? Related to what broader policy goal? With what long- as well as short-term effects? How does it help to keep getting children back in school who are suspended if there is no deeper understanding about the bases, rationales, and politics of suspensions? What good does it do to publish reports if they are not disseminated to groups in various communities who can begin to implement the reforms we are seeking or no parents or organized groups who care about the issue.

[16] The 1970 Census asked of persons in a 15 per cent sample whether they had attended "regular" (public or private) school or college at any time between February 1, 1970, and the time of enumeration. Though the question was phrased in terms of school attendance, it was interpreted by the Census Bureau to reflect nonenrollment.

It is impossible to tell exactly how long a child had to be out of school to be enumerated "not enrolled" by the Census Bureau. A Census questionnaire was delivered by postal carriers to every household several days before Census Day, April 1, 1970. In the larger metropolitan areas and some adjacent counties, altogether containing about three-fifths of the population of the United States, the householder was requested to fill out and mail back the form on Census Day. Approximately 87 per cent of the householders did so. The mailed-back forms were reviewed by the Census enumerator (or, in some localities, a Census clerk) and if the form was determined to be incomplete or inconsistent, a follow-up contact was made. The bulk of these follows-ups were made by telephone, the rest by personal visit. For the households which did not mail back their forms, a follow-up contact was also made, in almost all cases by personal visit and in the remainder by telephone.

For the remaining two-fifths of the population, the householder was requested to fill out the form and give it to the enumerator when he visited; approximately 80 per cent did so. Incomplete and unfilled forms were completed by interview during the enumerator's visit.

Since there was no way of telling how many households completed Census questionnaires at any given time in April, 1970, CDF assumed for purposes of this study that the Census nonenrollment figure referred to three consecutive months out of school (from February 1 to April 30, 1970). We know this is an extremely cautious assumption.

See Appendix A of *Children Out of School in America* for the methodology used to analyze Census data.

[17] OCR Forms OS/CR-102's for Fall 1972 and Fall 1973 as filed by local school districts.

[18] See Appendix A of *Children Out of School in America* for detailed description of our methodology.

populations that we felt fairly represented the different kinds of school systems and school children in America. While we do not extrapolate our findings to an overall national figure, we are confident that they reflect the out-of-school problems of children all over America, and that the ways the school systems operate in the areas we visited are representative of many parts of this country.

What did we find?

We found 5.4 per cent of all 6 to 17-year-old children out of school. Nearly one in 5 (19.6 per cent) 16- and 17-years-old were out of school.

Averages however, do not adequately tell the story for some groups of children in some places.

In Portland, Maine, almost 11 per cent of the white children 6 to 17 in the Riverton housing project were out of school. In Floyd County, Kentucky, 9.2 per cent of the white children in the Mud Creek area were out of school. In Denver, Colorado, Census Tract Eight, 9.6 per cent of the Mexican-American children were out of school. In our Survey 11.4 per cent of the Mexican-American, 8.3 per cent of the Portuguese, and 7.8 per cent of the Puerto Rican school-age children were out of school. In Denver's Census Tract Eight, 11.4 per cent of the Mexican-American 12 to 15 years old and 42 per cent of the Mexican-American 16 and 17 years olds were out of school. Nine per cent of the 12 to 15-year-old Puerto Rican children in one Holyoke, Massachusetts, census tract were out of school.

Among 16- and 17-year-old children, the out-of-school figures were startling in some census tracts. In a Holyoke, Massachusetts, area, 37.5 per cent of the Puerto Rican 16- and 17-year-olds were out of school. In a New Bedford, Massachusetts, census tract, 60 per cent of all 16- and 17-year-olds were out. In a Washington, D. C., census tract, almost 21 per cent of the black 16- and 17-year-olds were out of school. Twenty-seven per cent of the black children in a Montgomery, Alabama census tract were out of school.

Why are they out?

They are out because they are for the most part excluded by schools. It is as if too many school officials have decided that certain groups of children are beyond their responsibility and expendable. Not only do they exclude these children, they often do so arbitrarily, discriminatingly and with impunity.

As an example, we include a profile of a misclassified child in our report. His name is BJ. He is black, 10 years old at the time of the study, lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and dropped out of school after he was placed in a mentally retarded class without ever being given an I.Q. test. (He was assigned an I.Q. score, however!)[19] He is an example of what happens to many thousands of minority children throughout America, though the method of misclassification may vary. Our analysis of data from HEW's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) on children placed in educable mentally retarded (EMR) classes in more than 500 school districts in 5 states[20] shows that black children are twice as likely as white children to end up in EMR classes. In 190 of these districts the probability that black children would be placed in EMR classes was five times as great as for a white child and in 51 districts it was ten times as great. Our subsequent analysis of OCR data from 50 states bears out these disproportions on a national level.[21]

Twenty-seven per cent of the children out of school in our survey told us they were out because "they did not like school." But we dug deeper and learned that this meant many things.

If you are poor, and cannot pay for books like the children in Floyd County, Kentucky, or pay for all of the school fees or additional work materials that other children take for granted, you do not like school. Public education is not free in too many places. For example, in Floyd County:

> Carl, 17, dropped out in his third year of high school. He would not go back because he did not have any books. He asked for some but was told [by officials] they had no books to give. He feels he could do better if he had books to work with. There are six other school-age children in the family.
>
> Charlene, 16, left school two years ago because she couldn't get the money for lunch and books and could not do the work given in her classes. Her sister, Kathleen, 14, left school this year for the same reason.

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[19] *Children Out of School in America*, p. 25.

[20] See p. 103, *Children Out of School in America*. For discussion of misclassification problems faced by minority children, see David Kirp, William Buss and Peter Kurilloff, "Legal Reform of Special Education: Empirical Studies and Procedural Proposals," *California Law Review* 62 (1974), and Jane Mercer, *Labelling the Mentally Retarded* (Berkeley, 1973).

[21] These findings will be included in a 1975 CDF report on misclassification of minority children.

Poor families in Portland, Maine, could not afford to pay $2.00 per child per week to have their children ride the bus to the nearest junior or senior high school, two miles away. This contributed substantially to the high incidence of children not going to school.

Children do not like to go to school if they do not have decent clothes. We found a number of families where children had left school for lack of decent clothes and others who were about to do so because they felt embarrassed to be so poor.[22]

If children do not speak any English and nobody in school speaks any Spanish or Portuguese or French they do not like to go to school because there is little they can learn anyway. Bilingual education programs in America are only in token existence compared to the number and needs of non-English speaking children.[23]

If you are pregnant or married many schools will tell you not to come to school.[24] Truancy was a significant contributing factor to children being out of school. But few districts had either adequate knowledge about the extent of truancy or had taken any steps to identify its sources. Indeed if you are truant, most school districts will suspend you. In some districts, the proportion of suspensions for truancy to all suspensions was shocking:[25] Springfield, Massachusetts Census Tract 8008, 50 per cent; Columbia, South Carolina CT 5, 41 per cent; New Bedford, Massachusetts CT 6170, 38 per cent; Sumter County, South Carolina Precinct 2, 35 per cent; Denver, Colorado CT 41.01, 31 per cent; Holyoke, Massachusetts CT 8112, 30 per cent.

Who were the children out of school?

In sum, we found that if a child is not white, is white but not middle class, does not speak English, is poor, needs special help with seeing, hearing, walking, reading, learning, adjusting, growing up, is pregnant or married at age 15, is not smart enough, or is too smart, then in too many places school officials decided that school is not the place for that child to be.

Poor and minority children are particularly singled out. This shows up graphically in our survey's suspension figures where almost 13 per cent of all black secondary students were suspended—three times the rate of white students suspended. The rate of black secondary school suspensions in some districts in our survey exceeded 30 per cent.

Of all the suspensions 63.4 per cent we found were for nondangerous offenses. Twenty-five per cent were for truancy and tardiness. Not only do schools suspend far too many children, they often do so unilaterally and without fair procedures.

WHY WE SHOULD CARE?

Why should anybody care? We should care because we cannot teach our children justice if adults act unjustly.[26] It is indecent that some children are robbed of minimum tools like schooling that they need to survive in American society. As the Fifth Circuit justices recently pointed out in a school suspension case:

> In our increasingly technological society, getting at least a high school education is almost necessary for survival. Stripping a child of access to educational opportunity is a life sentence to second-rate citizenship.[27]

That we sentence certain groups of children disproportionately to this fate is even more cruel. But middle-class and white parents should not view the problem of children who are out of school as just a black children's problem. Three-fourths of all children out of school are white. It is not just poor children. Far more children out of school come from families with incomes over $10,000 than from families with incomes under $4,000. It is not just children from families with little education who are excluded. More children who are out of school come from families with over 12 years' schooling than from families with 8 or less years of schooling. Children out of school do not come only from single-parent families: many children out of school live with two parents. School exclusion is not just an old children's problem. According to the census there are as many children out of school who are under 16 as there are over 16. Three-fourths of a million children out of school in 1970, according to the United States Census, were between 7 and 13 years old.[28]

[22] See *Children Out of School in America*, pp. 85–86, for discussion of children without clothing. See pp. 78–89, for poverty related school attendance barriers in general.

[23] *Children Out of School in America*, pp. 76–78.

[24] *Children Out of School in America*, pp. 68–71.

[25] *Children Out of School in America*, pp. 62–68.

[26] *Children Out of School in America*, p. 126. See pp. 117–150 for overall discussion of school discipline and its exclusionary impact on students.

[27] *Lee* v. *Macon County*, 490 F.2d 458 at 460.

[28] U. S. Bureau of the Census; Census of Population and Housing: 1970 Subject Report: School Enrollment PC(2)-5A.

School exclusion is a major problem which reflects major institutional failure, most notably public school failure. But it reflects the broader uncaringness of society which permits schools to exclude children this way. Sadly, we will document this same kind of institutional failure and societal unresponsiveness in area after area affecting millions of American children.

BARRIERS TO CHILD ADVOCACY

There will be many barriers against trying to bring about change on behalf of children and families. One will be entrenched professionalism. So many of us have worked so long in designing and administering policies that we do not want to admit they may no longer work. Professionals must re-examine their attitudes and actions and open themselves to new ways of doing things.

Problems of misclassification of children are rampant, and so are examples of public schools refusing to serve children with identifiable learning or physical handicaps. Who protects children's interests in these cases? Parents? Certainly they are the primary source of energy and concern. But in many cases they alone are no match for the resources, jargon, and inertia of bureaucratic systems. Education officials? Unfortunately it seems that in too many places, efficiency and economy of school management have replaced serving children as their primary concern. Professionals? Here is the statement of one psychologist who believed in his responsibility to see that Massachusetts schools improved their offering to children with special needs. He said:

> As psychologists, we wanted to correct the misclassification of children in Boston. The public record of the school department's unwillingness to change its practices in a variety of areas relating to black and other low income children had been abundantly clear. Several of us had attempted to promote some changes by working with school department staff but with little support or change occurring. After months of careful discussion, we decided to explore the option of legal action. . . . The first response to the filing of the suit was consternation on the part of the Massachusetts Psychological Association. They were disturbed that professionals would sue on behalf of children's rights.[29]

But he persisted and together with a coalition of other professionals, parents, and community groups, succeeded in getting major reforms in the services provided to special-needs children. The psychologist went on to say,

> One compelling lesson for me was that the filing of the legal complaint gave rise to a series of positive changes even though the allegations have never been argued in court. . . . It seems to be that if we are concerned with more than rhetoric about children's rights, then we as professionals must address the means by which we, in combination with other concerned professionals and citizens, can work to translate the rhetoric into better, more human practices.

Professionals often resort to endless excuses for opposition or inaction regarding the interests of children and families. Among the excuses I hear most often are:

1. "We're the experts. Parents do not understand the complexities of the problem and should stay out of it." But it is unnatural for parents to stay out of decisions affecting the well-being of their children. In many cases parental non-participation would be the last outcome a professional would want. Indeed, recent research by Professor Bronfenbrenner and others has shown that the most effective programs in early childhood education or remedial programs for older children are those which build on and enrich their parents' involvement rather than only supplement or compensate for it.[30]

2. "I admit the facts, but the problem isn't very important from my perspective and besides, it is not my responsibility." Parents need the cooperation, insight, and abilities professionals have to offer. If *we* turn a deaf ear on their pleas to help them speak for their children, where are they to turn?

3. "We have known all along that these things were happening, and we have made efforts to correct the situation. Give them time." In how

[29] Milton Budoff, "Engendering Change in Special Educational Practices," unpublished paper presented at a symposium on "Psychoeducational Classification and Public Policy" at the meeting of the American Psychological Association (New Orleans, 1974).

[30] Nothing is more important to children than having parents regain the confidence to act on behalf of their children. Increasingly parents have been treated as interlopers in their children's lives by too many professionals. For example, schools keep increasing numbers of records on children about almost everything. They share them with almost everybody except parents and children, as an upcoming CDF study of Los Angeles record keeping practices will show. Schools feel free to expel, suspend, track, and otherwise place a child out of a normal classroom without ever informing many parents, explaining why such exclusion or change is necessary, and without any certainty that their actions are providing what the children need.

many cases is time all that is needed for change? In how many is this either a delaying tactic at worst, or insensitivity to a child's continued endurance of an injustice at best?

4. "What you say is true, but other professionals have similar problems in being responsive and involved. We're no worse than they are." Generalizing guilt is not sufficient. I have never understood the contention that it is all right for us to do wrong because others also do wrong. Such attitudes deny the need for leadership that others might follow.

5. "The problem is too large for us. It is really a matter for government concern." Governments will not be concerned until citizens press their interests, and young citizens are totally dependent on the responsibility and conscience of adults to speak on their behalf. If it is true that the cost of needed spending or reform can only be met at the government level, professionals must ask themselves if they have done everything they can within their personal and professional abilities to help government move in that direction.

6. "We are aware of the problem, but until more is known about its cause and the effects of various programs, we cannot make recommendations. However, we are continuing to study the matter." Certainly basic research into many areas of child development in years to come will unearth valuable information which will improve our understanding of what to do to improve the lives of children. But is it responsible to wait until all the facts are in before advocating intermediate steps to meet real needs with immediate consequences? I think not. A hungry child ought to be fed, not studied.

It has become clear to me that until all of us who say we care about children begin to act on those concerns our children will get the left-overs of our national, local, and personal priorities and resources. As individual parents, we try to see that our own children get first pickings, not scraps. It is time we extended that stance to include all children as professionals.

Two final barriers that are erected by those who seek to maintain the status quo should be mentioned. One is the attempt to label public interest advocates like myself as radical. People hear that we do litigation and immediately attack us though the courts and the legal process are the established way for righting unjust situations in this country. When corporations sue it is considered proper and their attorneys are well respected and well paid. When public interest groups sue on behalf of excluded groups they are attacked. This dual standard of acceptable advocacy is unfair and must be challenged. And those who complain most have been least responsive to other overtures for change.

Finally, we face the need for change in a time of increasing scarcity. So many people are willing to do things if it costs them nothing. But cheap humanitarianism is no longer possible. We are now reaping the result of years of neglect and of unequal allocation of resources to certain groups in our society. And child advocates, in order to survive, will have to rise above the current divide-and-conquer games that push education people to fight health people who in turn fight child-care people who then fight legal-services people over an exceedingly small slice of the national resource pie. Child advocates and others who care for children must begin to assert the needs of children and families against other major interest groups. This will be hard. But we must be very tough. I feel a little like Grace Abbott when she said in 1934:

> Sometimes when I get home at night in Washington I feel as though I had been in a great traffic jam. The jam is moving toward the Hill where Congress sits in judgment on all the administrative agencies of the Government. In that traffic jam are all kinds of vehicles. . . . There are all kinds of conveyances, for example, that the Army can put into the street—tanks, gun carriages, trucks. . . . There are the hayricks and the binders and the ploughs and all the other things that the Department of Argiculture manages to put into the streets . . . the handsome limousines in which the Department of Commerce rides . . . the barouches in which the Department of State rides in such dignity. It seems to me as I stand on the sidewalk watching it, it becomes more congested and more difficult. And then because the responsibility is mine and I must, I take a very firm hold on the handles of the baby carriage and I wheel it into the traffic.

The traffic is so much worse since Abbott's day. But we must fight it if we care about our young.

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